

S E R M O N S
O N
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS:

V O L. III.

THE R. M. O. N. A.

ON

THE R. M. O. N. A.

VOL. II.

227 g 14

S E R M O N S
O N
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

Extracted chiefly from the
WORKS OF DIVINES OF THE
LAST CENTURY.

By RICHARD BURN, LL. D.
CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE OF CARLISLE.

V O L. III.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL IN THE STRAND.
MDCCLXXIV.

S E R M O N S

Q N

PRACTICAL SUBTILTY

WORKS OF THE
LAW



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VOL. II

LONDON

PRINTED BY J. B. L. L. L.

1847

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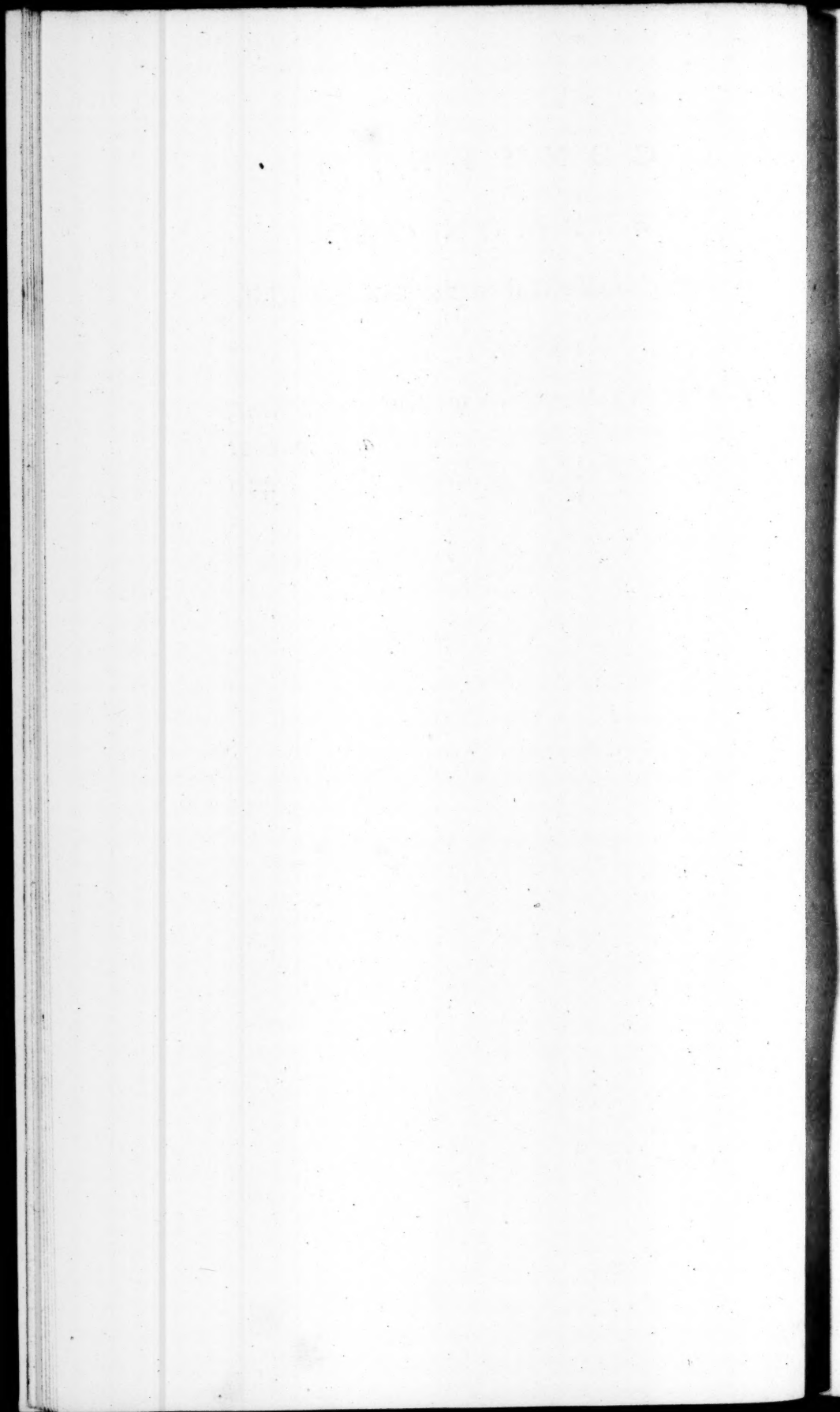
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S E R M O N I.

God's providential government
of the world.

[From Dr. OUTRAM.]

PSALM XCVII. I.

*The Lord is king, the earth may be glad
thereof.*

THE superintendency and providence of the great creator, over the works which he hath made, is a subject of the greatest importance to be well considered by us; as having an immediate influence upon our conduct, and being of excellent service to bear up our minds in all the accidents of life which may befall us.

This dominion and sovereignty of God, and his care and concern in governing the world, and all the works that are therein,

2 *God's providential government*

is implied in the former part of my text—*The Lord is king* : And the influence which the consideration thereof ought to have upon our minds, is implied in the latter part—*The earth may be glad thereof*.

And therefore the method hereby directed for our meditations, is, first,

TO REFLECT a little upon this doctrine of providence. And then,

TO SHEW, Unto what USES these considerations tend.

Now the providence of God is either GENERAL OR PARTICULAR. His GENERAL providence is that by which he concerns himself in the government of the whole world : His PARTICULAR providence is that by which he orders the several affairs and actions of his creatures.

As to his GENERAL providence—It is concerned in all things and persons in the world. God is no where unengaged, no where uninterested, or without business in the world. There is need of him in all places, and over all things.

Hence God, by some of the ancients, was called the *mind of the universe*; sustaining and supporting all things that are, by his continual presence and power. Hence St. Paul saith, *He giveth unto all, life, and breath, and all things.* And David breaks out into an astonishment upon this consideration; *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.* Behold the young ravens cry unto him, and he hears their cry. The fowls of the air have no treasure, yet they are rich; they have no barns, and yet they have store; they neither sow nor reap, yet they eat and drink by the providence of God; in which providence, they have great treasures of riches, and plenty of food and nourishment laid up.

Consider (says our Saviour) the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. God doth not only feed the hungry, but he cloaths the naked also; yea, he decks the earth every year with a fresh

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vesture, and paints the lilies of the field beyond the glory of Solomon.

And thus God by his providence preserves things animate and inanimate: he preserves being and order in things devoid of life; he gives food and nourishment to that which sprouts and grows out of the earth; and life and breath to every thing that lives and breathes. Upon the consideration whereof holy David thus breaks forth; *O sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp unto our God; who covereth the heavens with clouds; who prepareth rain for the earth; who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains; he giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.*

And *one* reason, why we may conclude, that God concerns and engageth his providence in all these things, may be this: *Because all things are his own.* All things are God's. Every creature must needs be his who created it. There is one only who is of himself; and all other things were made by him. God is an owner every where, and no wonder therefore if he be every

every way concerned ; he is no where without an interest ; he made the whole world, and is in the possession of all that he hath made, and no wonder if he engageth himself in his own possessions.

There is nothing too great, nothing too little for God to take care of. For *that* which was fit to be created, is fit to be preserved ; that which was worth the making, is worth the taking care of. And forasmuch as all things have him to be their preserver now, whom they had to be their maker at first ; it is not to be doubted, but he is as much concerned now to preserve, as he was then to create them.

'Tis true, he made the earth the lowest of things to tread upon, but he *made* it still, and therefore he still preserves it. Nothing is below his care, tho' he be infinitely high ; nothing is too mean a concernment for his goodness, tho' his happiness need nothing at all.

And therefore God pities, where we despise ; he is concerned, where we are careless ; God fixes his eye, and opens his ear, where a proud creature hath neither

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eye to see, nor ear to hear. The poor is not despised in God's sight, the needy is not forgotten by God's love, he doth not slight the cause of a poor, helpless, oppressed person. The justice of the poor is always justice in God's eye, altho' it be never so seldom in man's. The righteousness of the oppressed is right before him, whatever it be before men: And that which is a good cause in it self, is always good unto God, be it the cause of who it will.

Gold weighs nothing in God's sight, and whole mountains of silver with him are of no regard. For God righteously judgeth every man's right; he sees the afflictions of the afflicted; he pities the miseries of the miserable; he hears the crying of the poor, and the sighing of the prisoner soundeth in his bowels; and therefore he forgetteth not to make returns, but whispers inward comfort in answer to the cries that are made unto him: He made all things, and therefore he is concerned in all,

And as he *made* all things, so he is *sufficient for all*. It is no waking to his eye, to watch over every thing; no toil to his
power,

power, to order what he watcheth over. His eye never grows dim with seeing, nor his hand weary of working in the world. He is every where present, and therefore he cannot but see every thing; and being every where at hand, it is no hindrance, no trouble to him, to govern and rule all as he sees fit.

He is not snatched from one thing, by another falling in the way; he is not taken off from a former affair, by the rising up of a latter. Former things do not make him forget what is to come; nor do the things which are to come put the former out of memory. Things that are near do not keep him from things afar off; nor do things afar off estrange him from things that are near.

For he is not hurried from place to place; he is not snatched from one place to another: The east doth not call him from the west; nor doth the business of the south remove him from the north. For he is every where at once, and at once able to govern all things as one; and therefore no wonder at all, if all things be governed

by him. *Behold* (says the psalmist) *he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep; the Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Another reason of God's general providence is this; namely, *because one thing cannot be exactly governed without the government of another*; and therefore, he that governs one, governs all.

Man cannot be provided for in all his needs and exigence, without the beasts which man stands in need of: Nor can one beast be well provided for, without another. Man cannot well live, without the ox to plough his field, and the horse to carry him about his affairs. Nor can these be fed without grass, nor grass grow without showers, nor showers fall where there are no clouds, nor clouds be drawn up in vapours where there is no sun: And therefore the sun must shine, and the vapours must ascend, and the clouds gather, and the rain fall, and the grass grow, and the ox feed, that man may be provided for. The care of one thing infers the care of another; for what is said of one creature may be said of another,

ther, which are one way or other useful unto us.

But to go a little further than thus : Look up unto the timber of the house, or look down to the stones under our feet ; and these must be governed, in the government of man ; those above may fall on his head, and knock him into his grave ; and these below may hit his foot, and make him stumble into it. A fly may choak a man, or an unwholsome blast of air may breed an incurable disease. Therefore every breath of air, every the most inconsiderable animal, the house over our heads, the stones under our feet, must be governed and ordered by that providence that orders man ; which providence, as it hence appears, concerns it self in all things.

AND so much concerning a GENERAL providence.—I come now to consider God's PARTICULAR providence, by which he ordereth the several affairs and actions of every individual of his creatures.

In him we live, and move, and have our being : We, and all things with us : We, and all other creatures, being the crea-
tures

tures of the same creator also, who made the world and all things therein.

The growth of the lilies, the springing of the grass, the cries of the young ravens, the moulting of the sparrow's wings, and the fall of the sparrows to the ground, is not without our Father, nor without his providence, as our Saviour himself assures us. From whence we are instructed, that even amongst the fowls of the air, there are none so inconsiderable, no not even those (as our Saviour tells us) two whereof are sold for one farthing, but even their flights and rests, their rise and fall, is minded by God: and how much more all the ways of man? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

Our ways are before God's eye; and the eye cannot but see what is before it. And *all* our ways whatsoever are before him; so that he trieth all our thoughts, affections, words, and actions; our sleeps and waking, our lying down and our rising up, our ends and interests, our designs and actions, our rests and labours, our rising
in

in the morning, and our lying down at night. And God's eye doth not cast a superficial glance, doth not slide upon the surface of our actions, but his eye-beams pierce into the deep of our thoughts and designs, and therefore he is said, to ponder all our goings. Hence that of the prophet, *I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* He had before put an hard question, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,* says he, *Who can know it?* And yet he had no sooner asked it, but God answers, *I the Lord search the heart.*

Now the same *reasons* which there are for God's *general* providence, are of equal force in respect of his *particular* providence also.

Thus, *All actions in the world, are the actions of his creatures.* God made the world; and whatsoever is done in it, is done by something that God made. A wise father concerns himself in all the doings of his son: How much more shall God be concerned, in the deeds and sufferings, and in all the affairs of his creatures.

Especially, if we consider this also, *That the greatest effects do many times begin in the least causes.* The sea springs from little drops; and the clouds that cover the face of the sun, and pour down long and violent tempests upon us, do at first begin in single vapours, in small and invisible exhalations. And all these are under God's government and direction.

Moreover, we are to consider likewise, that God is *sufficient* to over-rule all the actions of all his creatures. And seeing that there is a need that his providence should govern all things, and seeing that God is the rightful and proper governor of the world, and seeing that he is, without toil, without care, without trouble, sufficient for that government; it is not to be doubted, but that his providence extends it self to all things, and to all the actions and affairs of all things whatsoever.

AND thus having in some sort illustrated the doctrine of the divine providence, both as to God's government of the world in *general*, and as to the *particular* ordering
of

of the several affairs and actions in it; I proceed to shew, What USE we are to make of these considerations.

AND,

I. If God's providence watch and order all things, then let *us* also imitate it as much as we can, in minding every thing that he doth in the world. It were not good (if it were possible to be otherwise) that our eye should sleep when God is awake; at least, that divine providence should do any thing which we should not consider.

God doth nothing in the world, but it is fit to be observed; his wisdom is no where unprofitably employed; and he doth all his works that we may see and learn, and great wonders, that we may see and fear.

Every thing that God doth, is most worthy our notice. God will be read in his *works* sometimes, as well as in his word. He expects that our eye should wait upon his hand. For (as the psalmist expresseth it), *as the eyes of servants look up to the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden,*
unto

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unto the hand of her mistress ; even so our eyes should wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us.

When we are in *distress* indeed, we look up to God every moment ; because we every moment long for deliverance : But God doth as well, and as well *for us* many times, when his doings do not alarm us in so awakening a manner ; and therefore we should observe his works at all times, one as well as another.

2. If God's providence be concerned in all things, if he governs all the issues and events of things ; then it becomes us to *rest satisfied with all the determinations of divine providence in the world.*—It is a noble patience, and a christian fortitude, to be content with God's government of the world, and to say *that* act is well done, which is done by God.

How many are there in the world, who quarrel with all that God doth ; who are always murmuring and complaining against God's government, accusing his care of neglect,

neglect, his wisdom of folly, and his eye of overlooking them and their affairs.

God can do nothing to please us, and therefore how should *men* give us satisfaction. We are never placed where we would; we are too much on one hand, or too much on the other; and the meaning always is, we are not so high as we would be. God can never do enough, tho' he do every day too much for us; and therefore we would be repairing every thing, and under pretence of serving God serve our selves.

But a blessing light upon that man's head, who rises up in the morning and blesteth God for the light, and then says, Do with me, O Lord, this day what thou wilt; behold I stand here ready for thy service; I am prepared for any employment, I am ready for any encounter; raise me up or cast me down, send me to the right or to the left, I am thine, and I am at thy disposal; and therefore if thou wilt afflict me, afflict me; if thou wilt try me, I am content; if my patience must serve thee in poverty, behold it is prepared and ready;
if

if my disgrace must glorify truth, if my shame must honour my God, behold my disgrace shall be my honour, and my shame shall be my glory, and my affliction shall be my happiness, and my service shall be my reward. This is to speak like a man, like a philosopher, and like a christian; and not like those who are always displeased with God's government of human affairs.

3. If God's providence governs all things, then *let us learn to improve and better our selves, from all the issue of that providence.* Let us learn to profit by all *his* actions, who doth nothing unprofitable in the world. When the morning dawns, let us thank God for the day to labour in; when the night approaches, let us bless him who hath made it a rest. If our affairs succeed, here is matter of thanks; if our designs miscarry, here is an exercise of patience.

If it be well with our friends, let us be thankful to the goodness of God; but if it be ill with them, let us reverence his justice.

If we be in health, there is an exhortation to labour; if we be sick, there is an admonition of our mortality.

If

If our relations die, this bids us to live upon God without them; and if they live, this shews us to live upon God in them, for it was he that provided them for us.

If our friends do us a kindness, let us bless God for them; if our enemies do us an injury, here is an opportunity to bless them for God, even for God's sake, and for the sake of the gospel, which bids us, *bleſs them that curſe us, and do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us.*

Thus a ſincere chriſtian hath ſomething in him, to receive every thing to his advantage; he hath within him a well of living water, which ſweetens every thing he drinks, tho' it be the dregs of the cup of affliction.

Thus every thing that God doth may be improved, and thus doth he intend that we ſhould improve by it: for, as every thing that he hath *revealed* is for our inſtruction, ſo alſo is every thing that he hath *wrought*.

4. Since the providence of God preſides in all human affairs, *let us endeavour to do*

what is pleasing in his sight. His providence saves men because they are good, and therefore let us not seek for salvation in the ways of wickedness.

To sin, is always a rebellion against God's will; but to sin, in hopes of gaining an advantage thereby, is to blaspheme his wisdom too; it is to provide against the provision of God, to secure our selves in peace by engaging in war against God's providence, and to hope for that by doing evil, which God hath promised only to doing well. Let us take heed therefore of doing evil that good may come. Let us never think of sinning for our profit, of doing unjustly for our advantage.

Altho' we secure our selves as well as we can, let us be assured that there is no security against God. He will hunt us in all our by-paths, he will trace all our crooked steps, he will find out all our falsehood, he will discover all our deceit, he will make us fools where we thought to be wise, and catch us where we thought to be safe, and baffle our crafts into infatuations, and turn our securities into dangers.

If

If righteousness will not defend us, which moves by the appointment of God; how should sin ever protect us, which throws us out of the protection of divine providence. A bad cause will in time beset the wisest, and disarm the strongest, and ruin the greatest man upon earth.

The wisest politician is a fool, in opposition to God; and legions of armies are as nothing, for the defence of an unrighteous end.

In a few words: Evil is a thing utterly indefensible. The sword cannot defend; the shield cannot give protection; it breaketh the spear in the arms of the mighty; and shrinks and hides it self in the day of battle. It is weak against its enemy, and strong against it self. So that the highest mountains cannot make a fort, nor all the quarries in the earth wall it about with safety.

Wherefore, Let us commit our selves to God in well doing. Let us commit no sin, though it were for a kingdom; nor step out of the way of righteousness for the greatest worldly advantage. Let us be

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so honest, as to dare to do well, and trust God; and be content that God's providence should maintain us without other mens goods, and justify us without falsehood, and defend us without an injury to our neighbour, and save us without the help of sin.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

Remedy against trouble.

[From Bishop PATRICK's Heart's-Ease.]

JOHN XIV. I.

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe
in God, believe also in me.*

IT is not either fineness of wit, or abundance of wealth, or any such like inward or outward ornament, that makes the difference between men, and renders one man better than another; but the firmness of good principles, the settledness of the spirit, and the quiet of the mind. To the obtaining of which, all the old philosophers, many hundreds of years before our Saviour, did wisely summon all their forces; all whose lessons, when they are summed up, amount only to this, to teach a man how to be contented. Socrates was, upon this score, accounted the best among them; because, though he understood but a little

of the frame of nature, yet he well understood himself, and perceived, that he was not the wisest man, that could read rare things in the stars, and could follow the paths of the sun, and trace all the heavenly bodies in the course which they run, but he that could tell how not to be troubled, either for the want of that knowledge, or for any other thing.

Christianity hath not a new design in hand, but more rare and excellent instruments to effect the old. What heathens could speak of, it enables us to do. And still it is as true as ever it was, that nothing betters a man's condition, but that which rids him of all his griefs, and eases him of his troubles. Christians are not distinguished from the rest of the world, by outward forms and fashions, or by professing notions different from others; but by the renewing of their minds, by the peaceableness of their thoughts, by charity and heavenly-mindedness. And if we behold in their minds, as in other mens, violent convulsions, unsettled thoughts, trouble, and sorrow; they are still fast bound
to

to worldly things, they have not attained the end of their Christianity, and are but little bettered by their new condition.

That Christ came to discharge the mind of those troublesome guests; my text, and many other verses of the ensuing chapter, plainly inform us: The sense of which is this, Do but believe that I am from God, and that what I say is his mind, and you need not be troubled. The faith of Christ is an antidote against all evil. Peace is the proper result of the christian temper. It is the great kindness which our religion doth us, that it brings us to a settledness of mind, and a consistency within our selves.

IN discoursing upon which subject, I shall first set forth some REASONS why a christian ought not to be troubled;

And then lay down some RULES to keep our hearts from trouble.

FOR the first, let us consider, that *trouble is a great disparagement to the promises of the gospel*, which gives us ease in every case, unless we refuse to become God's patients,

and will not use his remedies. In case of the prevalency of sin; the gospel saith unto us, that sin shall not have the dominion over us; that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free; that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. To the poor and persecuted man, it saith, the Lord is our helper, and we shall not fear; and, blessed are ye, if ye be persecuted for righteousness sake. And (not to enumerate more particulars) it saith to every christian, whatsoever condition he be in, Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. When we sit down therefore desponding, either under the power or the guilt of our sins, and think that they can never be forgiven, or never overcome; when we murmur, or are dejected, because we are mean, despised, and afflicted; when we are impatient for the loss of our friends, or our goods, or the like; we do only betray our own ignorance, or unbelief, or idleness;

idleness; we either know not what the gospel speaks, or we do not believe it, or we resolve not to be the better for it, if it will put us to any labour; either we, or the gospel, must bear the blame of our trouble and disquiet; either the gospel cannot relieve us, or we do ill to behave ourselves as though it could not. Every good christian, no doubt, will accuse himself, and not the gospel: But let him consider, that he cannot do honour to the gospel, nor to his Saviour, but by ceasing his discontents; for others will think, that he is no better physician than the rest, who hath no better success in his cures.

It is also a great *disparagement to the providence of God* which rules the world. If there were no providence, I confess we should be destitute of the greatest reason that man hath, against fears, and cares, and sorrows. And he that is troubled, would be less unreasonable, because all the care would lie upon himself, and his own shoulders must alone bear the burden of every accident. But seeing we acknowledge

ledge an eternal wisdom, an infinite, unprejudiced understanding, that governs and superintends in all affairs; it is the greatest folly to be disquieted, and to deport our selves as if we and chance ruled all.

Some have satisfied themselves with this single thought, that it is in vain to be troubled; since things must not be as we will, but as that almighty being pleases; A cold comfort, one would think, to be content upon necessity; and yet this some heathens have mainly insisted upon, as their support. Thanks be to God, that we have something better to quiet us, and that is this, That the world is governed not merely by God's will, but by his wisdom. He disposeth all things according to his pleasure; but it pleaseth him to do all things for the best. He rules the world, not as an absolute lord, so that we should be sensible only of his power; but as a loving father, so that we may be assured of his goodness. And therefore his children should not be displeased, as if they were none of his family, nor within the verge of his care; but they should comfort themselves, that they are in
such

such safe hands, who will do nothing but with the greatest reason, and for the most excellent ends.

To be troubled, speaks as if God had provided better for the beasts than for mankind; for they live in peace within themselves, and we hear not of their murmurs and complaints. And by the same reason that we are troubled, all the men in the world may be vexed also; and so none think or speak well of God, but behave themselves as if he cared not for his rational creatures. Every man may consider, that God hath endowed him with an understanding of such a size, with abilities and capacities of such a proportion, and measured for him such a fortune and condition as now he hath. If he is not contented, but fretteth within himself, that he is not better; then so may another man, for he wants something also; yea, so may all men, for they are all imperfect. And upon the same grounds, that a man is troubled for the want of one particular thing, he may at the next step be troubled that he is not a king, or that he is not an angel; and an angel may be troubled, that he was not made to understand more: And so the best

best things would be most miserable, because they understand best their own wants.

In short, God's providence hath so ordered the several degrees of things in the world, that none of them should be troubled, but should mutually help and be assistant unto each other in their several wants. And so there is not the greatest man living, but stands in need of the meanest, as much as the meanest doth of him; just as none of us can live without the beasts, no more than many of them can live without us.

What things we want, God hath otherwise supplied us with; either in some other kind, or by some other help. Which is an observation that we are so well acquainted withal, that we are not discontented because we need cloaths, and were born naked into the world; nor do we account that the beasts have a privilege above us, because they come well clad into being, and provided with apparel for all their lives, or are armed with horns and hoofs: For God hath given unto us reason, which is a better thing; and hath made the other creatures both to cloath and to arm us.

Now

Now so it is in other cases : As God hath made the brutes to help us in lesser things ; so hath he made other men to relieve our greater necessities, to comfort us in our sadnesses, to supply us in our wants, to advise us in our difficulties, and to be eyes and hands unto us, if we have no wisdom nor strength of our own ; yea his own Son hath he given, to make an universal provision for us. Now when we ask and resolve our selves, Which is better, to come into the world with cloaths on our back, or to have reason ? we should ascend a little higher in our thoughts, and put to ourselves a parallel case, Which is best, to have all in our own hands and sole disposal, or to have a supreme providence, an infinite wisdom to govern all our affairs ? When we find the difference between these two, let us not live as if God ruled not at all, or as if it were better that we did rule than he.

I PROCEED now to the second part of my discourse, namely, to lay down some RULES to be observed by us, in order to preserve us from trouble.

AND

AND that we may find out the truest rules for the obtaining peace and quiet, let us seriously attend to this one consideration, that *evil is not so much in things, as in our selves*; and if the evil which disquiets us be not in outward things, neither is the good which must give us rest to be found in them. All unquietness arises from the mind. This therefore is the first thing we must do, namely, get acquaintance with our own hearts, and see there the cause of all our griefs; for nothing will heal us without our selves.

For want of this easy observation it is, that men labour for peace, at endless expences, both of pains, money, and time; yet never purchase it. Some seek for it in company and chearful society, which they think can put away trouble; but still they consider not, that they carry the disease about them, which cannot be so cured. Others seek for it in a contrary way of a solitary life, by quitting the affairs of the world, and retiring from society; but all this while they retire not from themselves, and the evil spirit which is in them is not yet cast out: So while they thought they
had

had ended their trouble, they did but change it; while they shake off all, they are disquieted, because they have not shaken off themselves: Their own foolish opinions, appetites, passions, and desires remain unmortified; and, though they should never see mankind, they will have vexation enough from these. Others seek for it in travel, and removing from place to place; but this will not effect the business neither, as long as they have themselves in company. Others leave off some evil practices, which they find to disturb them; but as long as the body of sin is remaining, they are not settled.

Here therefore we must begin, in the mortification of ourselves. If we be not quieted within, every thing in the world will make us miserable; if we be, then nothing can harm us. If our false opinions, unreasonable desires, fond affections, ungrounded hopes, be alive; we are no longer quiet, than the world pleaseth. Our peace is at the mercy of every report, of every man's mouth, and all the several accidents of evil that are in the world. If we be sick,

and are afraid to die ; if we be in pain, and have no patience ; if we be scorned, and are proud ; if we be lessened in our estates, and are covetous ; then nothing can help us from being miserable. But, on the contrary, if we do not fear death so much as an ill life, if we think impatience and murmuring worse than any bodily disease, if we think pride to be the greatest reproach and the highest disgrace, and take covetousness to be the greatest beggary and the basest poverty ; there is no harm a man can feel by death, or sickness, or scorn, or want.

When all the alterations in the world will not quiet us, one alteration will ; and that is, the change of our opinions concerning things, and our estimate of them. By this one, more will be done, than by ten thousand changes. Even an heathen could say, Be not intralld to pleasure or pain, to hope or fear, to life or death, and thou art free. What he said in this case, we may say in all other ; nothing can overcome him, that is not first overcome by his own imaginations and passions. A man perhaps is poor and despised : What of that, if he hath not this beggarly thought
also,

also, that riches and honour make a man? Another may have a bad opinion of him: But what then? if he himself hath not also a foolish opinion, that mens censures are greatly to be regarded.—In every thing, let us rule but our selves, and we shall be at ease.

HAVING laid this foundation, the next rule I shall propose is this, *Know thy duty, and do it.* An ignorant person, or a wicked person, can have no true peace. Therefore we must be inquisitive into the gospel, and labour to understand what we have to do; and then resolve heartily, and endeavour seriously to do it; and, finally, inquire what remedy there is, if we fail and fall short, after these hearty and serious endeavours. Now the sum of the gospel is this; that we live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And where after all our care we fail; if we confess our sins, and repent thereof and amend, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all unrighteousness.

IN the next place; in the doing of our duty, let us *make a prudent choice of the fittest means*. Prudence saves men a great deal of labour in the doing of their duty, and a great deal of trouble afterwards; that is, it keeps us from being molested, either by our selves or others. The purchase of peace is worth all our study; and if we can obtain it by art and prudent compliances, we shall find that we are gainers by our labour. Rashness and violence sometimes create us more trouble, than men would otherwise have brought upon us. We run our selves into broils and tumults, and kindle flames about us, when other men would let us live in peace, and not disturb us. Let us therefore not only be innocent, and mean well; but wise also, and manage well. Next after honesty and integrity, let us study prudence and discretion; so as not to be alike zealous in all things, nor passionate and hasty in any thing; but, as St. James adviseth, to shew out of a good conversation, our works with meekness of wisdom.

AND

AND having used our prudence, *let us not be solicitous about events.* This would be a great preservative against fears of what may happen, and against vexation for what is happened. For to what purpose should we trouble our selves, either with the one or the other; when all our prudence and skill cannot help it? Fear indeed betrays our succours, and disarms us of our weapons, and makes us run into those dangers, which our prudence might have prevented. Therefore let us do our best, and leave the success to God.

ANOTHER rule conducive to this purpose is, *to have a little esteem of our selves.* A proud man is never at rest. The leaves of the tall trees shake with every breath; and no man can open his mouth to whisper an ill word, but a proud man is disturbed. Whereas the observance of this rule, will make us say when we are despised and vilified, that they cannot think so low of us, as we do of our selves; and then we shall not be moved. It will help us in poverty, sickness, and all misfortunes, whilst we say, we are less

than the least of all God's mercies. Our conceit of our selves is the cause that we quarrel at every thing which happens, as if we were such considerable creatures, that every thing must be done to please us, and God must rule the whole world according to our humour, yea and no body else must be served and gratified but our selves. Let us but know our selves, and all will be well. There is no reason that such poor things, as we are, should take matters so ill and unkindly at God's hands as we do. We are well used, tho' we were in a worse condition.

FURTHER: Let us labour *to understand the true nature and value of every thing.* I will instance in a few things: That which is future is uncertain: That which is born may die: That which once was not, may again not be. What hath happened to others, may happen to me. That which hath its value from fancy, is not much worth. That which can do us no harm unless we will, need not be much feared. That which a man can live without, he need not covet. Such like rules as these, will the consideration of the nature
of

of things teach us; and being thus instructed, we shall find much quiet from many occasions of trouble.

IN the next place, Let us take care *to have but one rule or principle of our lives*; and that is, to chuse only that which Christ hath commanded in the Gospel, and to refuse only that which he hath forbidden. This is the principle whereby we may guide our lives, and it will never fail us. Now Christ hath said, Be holy, humble, meek, patient; but no where hath he said, Be rich, be honoured, or the like. The former therefore, and not these, we must always chuse. He hath bid us likewise, that we should not speak evil of others, nor hate them, nor return their injuries: But no where hath he said, Do not suffer affliction, do not put up those wrongs, and the like: The former things then are those only, which we must resolve not to do. And by this course it is manifest, what a great way we shall go to the obtaining peace. Let us follow scripture and reason; and let the world approve of what we do, if they please. Nothing is

more troublesome to a man, than an ambitious desire of every one's good word. But he will find enough to do oftentimes, who desires to please a fool; but, how much trouble he shall have, that would please no body knows how many of them, is scarcely to be imagined. He must not chuse one thing, but ten thousand; one thing this moment, and another the next; and innumerable contradictions at the same time, to please divers men. Let us therefore content our selves with this, God is sooner pleased than men. Let us resolve upon his will, to let that be ours, and to keep it. Let us chuse that which no body can hinder, no accident can forbid. If we cannot do God's will, we can suffer it. Why then should we be troubled, when our own choice remains intire, and we have what we would have.

LASTLY: To prevent misunderstanding, it is to be considered all along, that these rules are such, as *suppose the use of some other*, that have an universal influence upon christian practice; such as prayer; giving thanks in
I every

every case; meditation of heaven and eternal blessedness, of God's mercy and goodness, and of Christ's death and intercession for us. To all which religious exercises, if we add those other rational and natural considerations, we may be well eased.

The truth is, there are no such cordials as those of the christian religion. Nothing can support and comfort us, so speedily and substantially, as the belief, that God was manifested in our flesh, and therefore hath a singular love to us, and care of us: That the Lord Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God; and that we are members of his body: That he hath a great compassion to us, and both power and will to relieve or sustain us: That we suffer nothing but what he himself suffered; and are in the way to that glory where he dwelleth: And that he will certainly reward our patience, submission, and resignation to him, with endless joys.

These things we must always have in our eye and in our heart. On these foundations we must lay the weight of our souls. Which will quiet our desires, and banish our fears, and cut off vain hopes, and restore our very

reason to a greater clearness and strength. So that we shall be the better able to use all other helps, for the curing all the spiritual diseases we labour under.

What remains then, but our hearty endeavour, thus to settle and compose our selves? Let us strip our souls of their former conceits, and cloath them with these notions. We must root out of our minds these weeds of bitterness,--high esteem of ourselves and of worldly things, earthly love, unreasonable desire, fond hopes and expectations, rashness and inconsideration; and plant in their stead such good principles as I have been now recommending, and take care that they grow up there.

The government of the soul must be altered from the rule of popular opinions, and the tyranny of fancies and imaginations, to the sole command of reason and religion. In this great alteration, let us engage all our forces. Let us think how shameful it is, to get all knowledge, and not to know our selves, nor how to enjoy our selves; and how miserable he is, that searcheth into all things,
only

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only neglects his own peace, or seeks it among the occasions of his trouble.

Let us discharge our selves therefore, with all speed, of our inordinate passions, of rashness and hasty thoughts. Let us learn our duty, and do it. Let us know God, our selves, and the world. And when we are once humble, prudent, thankful, and heavenly-minded; we shall not be displeased at what God or men do: but shall pass evenly, and with tranquility, thro' this vale of tears, until we arrive at the land of everlasting blessedness.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

The house of feasting.

[From Bishop TAYLOR'S Sermons.]

I COR. XV. 32.

—*Let us eat and drink, for to morrow
we die,*

THIS is the Epicure's proverb, begun upon a weak mistake, started by chance from the discourses of drink, and thought witty by the undiscerning company, and which prevailed infinitely, because it struck their fancy luckily, and maintained the merry-meeting. But, as it happens commonly to such discourses, so this also, when it comes to be examined by the consultations of the morning, and the sober hours of the day, it seems the most witless, and the most unreasonable in the world. For what can be more unreasonable, because men shall die to morrow, and by the sentence of God are now descending to
their

their graves, that therefore they should first destroy their reason, and then force dull time to run faster, that they may finish their lives sooner, and die like beasts?

But they thought there was no life after this; or if there were, that it was without pleasure. Therefore, say they, now let us enjoy the delicacies of nature, and lose no time; for the sun drives hard, and the shadow is long, and the days of mourning are at hand, but the number of the days of darkness and the grave cannot be told.

Thus they thought they discoursed wisely; but their wisdom was turned into folly. For all their arts of provision, and securities of pleasure, were nothing but unmanly prologues to death and fear and folly, to sensuality and beastly pleasures.

But *they* are to be excused rather than *we*. They placed themselves in the order of beasts and insects, and esteemed their bodies nothing but receptacles of food, and their soul the fine instrument of perception; and therefore they treated themselves accordingly. But then, why *we* should do the same things, who are led by other prin-

principles, and a more severe institution, and better notices of immortality, who understand what shall happen to a soul hereafter, and know that this time is but a passage to eternity, this body but a servant to the soul, and the whole man in order to God and to felicity; this, I say, is more unreasonable, than to eat poison to preserve our health, and to enter into the flood that we may die a dry death; this is a perfect contradiction to the state of good things, whither we are designed, and to all the principles of a wise philosophy, whereby we are instructed that we may become wise unto salvation.

That I may therefore contribute some assistances towards the curing the miseries of mankind, and reprove the follies and improper motions towards happiness; I shall endeavour to represent to you,

I. That plenty, and the pleasures of the world, are no proper instruments of happiness.

II. That intemperance is a certain enemy to it, making life unpleasant, and death troublesome and intolerable.

I. Plenty,

I. Plenty, and the pleasures of the world, are no proper instruments of happiness.— It is necessary, that a man have some violence done to himself, before he can receive them. For nature's bounds are, to be free from hunger, and thirst, and cold; that is, to have nothing upon us, that puts us to pain: against which, we are provided with the fleece of the sheep, and the skins of beasts; by the waters of the fountain, and the herbs of the field. And of these no good man is destitute, for that share that he can need, to fill those appetites and necessities which he cannot otherwise avoid.

For it is unimaginable, that God should be a parent, natural and indulgent to the beasts of the forest, and the fishes of the sea, to every herb and plant, and to every creeping thing that creepeth upon the face of the earth, making his storehouses always to stand open to them; and that for the chief of all these, even to the noblest production of the creation, he should have made no provision, and only produced in us vehement appetites, and left us to chance or violence to feed and cloath us.

This is so far from truth, that we are certainly more provided for by nature; than all the world besides. For every thing can minister to us; and we can pass into none of nature's cabinets, but we find our table spread. So that what David said to God, *Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I go to heaven, thou art there; if I descend to the deep, thou art there also; if I take the wings of the morning, and flee into the uttermost parts of the wilderness, even there thou wilt find me out, and thy right hand shall uphold me;*—we may say it concerning our table and our wardrobe. If we go into the fields, we shall find them tilled by the mercies of heaven, and watered with showers from God, to feed and cloath us. If we go down into the deep; there God hath multiplied our stores, and filled a magazine which no hunger can exhaust. The air drops down delicacies; and the wilderness can sustain us; and all that is in nature, that which feeds lions, and that which the ox eateth, that which the fishes live upon, and that which is the provision for the birds, all *that* can keep us alive.

And

And if we consider, that for these nature hath prepared but one kind of food, and this also we sometimes secure from them with guards, and drive away birds and beasts from that provision which nature hath made for them, yet seldom can we find that any of these perish with hunger; much rather shall we find, that we are secured by the provisions proper for the more noble creatures; by that providence, that disposeth all things; by that mercy, that gives us all things, which to other creatures are ministered singly; by that labour, that can procure what we need; by that wisdom, which can consider concerning future necessities; by that power, which can force it from inferior creatures; and by that temperance, which can fit our meat to our necessities.

For if we go beyond what is needful; as we find sometimes more than was promised, and very often more than we need, so we disorder the certainty of our felicity, by putting that to hazard, which nature hath secured.

For it is not certain, that if we desire to have the wealth of the Indies, we shall for
all

all this never want. It is not nature that desires these things; but appetite, and violence. By a disease of the mind we entered into that necessity; and in that state of trouble it is likely we may dwell for ever, unless we reduce our appetites to nature's measures.

And therefore it is, that plenty and pleasures are not the proper instruments of felicity. Because felicity is not a jewel that can be locked in one man's cabinet. God intended that all men should be made happy; and he, that gave to all men the same natural desires, and to all men provision of satisfactions by the same meats and drinks, intended, that it should not go beyond that measure of good things, which corresponds to those desires which all men naturally have.

He that cannot be satisfied with common provision, hath a bigger need than he that can: It is harder, and more contingent, and more difficult, and more troublesome, for him to be satisfied. He that can be satisfied out of nature's stores, may defy the pleasures of costly ambition. Nature's provisions are easy; they are to be gotten

gotten without amazing cares. No man needs to flatter, if he can live as nature did intend. He needs not swell his accounts, and intricate his spirit with arts of subtilty and contrivance. He can be free from fears; and the chances of the world cannot concern him.

In short, All our trouble is from within us: And if a moderate fare can cure all our desires, so that we shall have neither thirst, nor pride, nor envy, nor ambition; we are lodged in the bosom of felicity. And indeed, no men sleep so soundly, as they that lay their heads upon nature's lap. For a plain provision, drawn from the storehouse of nature, can cure our hunger and thirst: But the most sumptuous entertainment cannot satisfy our ambition, and our pride.

He therefore that hath the fewest desires, and the most quiet passions, whose wants are soon provided for, and whose possessions cannot be disturbed with violent fears, he that dwells nigh to satisfaction, and can carry his needs and lay them down where he pleases; this is the happy man: and

this is not to be done in great designs, and swelling fortunes.

To get more than a man needs, he must labour infinitely. But to drive away thirst and hunger, a man needs not sit in the fields of the oppressed poor, nor lead armies, nor break his sleep, nor suffer shame and danger, and envy, and affront. If men did but know, what felicity dwells in the cottage of a virtuous poor man, how sound his sleeps, how quiet his breast, how composed his mind, how free from care, how easy his provision, how healthful his morning, how sober his night, how joyful his heart; they would never admire the noises, and the diseases, the throng of passions, and the violence of unnatural appetites, that fill the houses of the luxurious, and the heart of the ambitious.

Those which we call pleasures, are but imagery, and fantastic appearances; and such appearances even poor men may have. If a man loves privacy; a poor fortune can have that, when princes cannot. If he loves noises; he can go to the places of publick concourse, and may glut himself with

with strange faces, and strange manners, and the wild designs of all the world. And when that day comes in which we shall die, nothing of the eating and drinking remains, nothing of the pomp and luxury, but the sorrow to part with it, and shame to have dwelt there where wisdom seldom comes, unless it be to call men to sober counsels, to a plain, and severe, and more natural way of living.

The result is this : The private life, that which is freest from tumult and vanity, noise and luxury, business and ambition, nearest to nature, and a just entertainment of our necessities; that life is nearest to felicity.

Therefore let us learn to despise the swellings and the diseases of a disordered life, and a proud vanity. Let us be troubled for no outward thing beyond its merit. Let us enjoy the present temperately. And then we shall be pleased to see, that we have so little share in the follies and miseries of the intemperate world.

HAVING thus shewn, that plenty and

the pleasures of the world are no proper instruments of felicity ; I proceed,

Idly, To shew, further, that intemperance is a certain enemy to it ; making life unpleasant, and death troublesome and intolerable.

It is an enemy, in the first place, to *health* ; which is the handle by which we take hold of pleasures, and is the relish and seasoning of life. For, what content can a full table administer to a man in a fever ? And he that hath a sickly stomach, admires at his happiness, that can feast upon coarse fare.

Health is the opportunity of wisdom, and the fairest scene of religion. It is a state of joy and thanksgiving ; and, in every of its periods, feels a pleasure, from the blessed emanations of a merciful providence.

The world doth not administer, nor feel, a greater pleasure, than for a man to be newly delivered from the tortures of the stone, or the convulsions of a cholic. And no instrument can sound out the praises of the Almighty so chearfully, as the man that rises from his bed of sorrows, and
considers

considers what an excellent difference he feels from the groans and intolerable accents of yesterday. Health carries us to church, and makes us rejoice in the communion of saints; and intemperance makes us to lose all this.

But there is nothing that shews the excellency of temperance, in order to our temporal felicity and health, more than this; that they who have been guilty of excess, and have left virtue and sober counsels, and first lost their temperance, and then lost their health, are forced to run to temperance and abstinence for their cure. Then, a spare diet and an humbled body, fasting and emptiness, and arts of destroying their sin and sickness, are in season. But by the same means they might preserve their health, by which they do restore it.

It is indeed to be wondred at, that men eat and drink so much for pleasure sake; and yet for the same pleasure should not give over, and betake themselves to the delights of temperance: since to be healthful and holy, is so great a pleasure. However, certain it is, that no man ever repented,

that he arose from the table sober, healthful, and with his wits about him ; but very many have repented, that they sat so long, till their health, and their virtue, and their God was departed from them.

For as intemperance is an enemy to health, so is it also to *pleasure*. Whilst a man is satisfied with nature's provisions, he can never want pleasure ; but all excess destroys it. It is an excellent pleasure to be satisfied with a moderate diet ; and a man can never then want pleasure, when it is so ready for him, that nature hath spread it over all its provisions. Fortune and art give delicacies : Nature gives meat and drink. And what nature gives, fortune cannot take away. And if in satisfaction and freedom from care, and security and proportions to our own natural appetite, there can be pleasure ; then we may know how to value the sober and natural tables of the virtuous and wise, before that state of affluence which a war can lessen, and a tyrant take away, or a pirate may intercept, or a blast may spoil, and is
always

always contingent, and is so far from satisfying, that it destroys the appetite and capacity of pleasure. For he that feasts every day, feasts no day. And however men treat themselves, sometimes they will need to be refreshed beyond it. But what will they have for a festival, whose every day is a festival? Even a perpetual fulness will make them glad to seek pleasure from emptiness, and variety from poverty or an humble table.

Further: Intemperance is the *nurse of vice*. It creates rage and anger, pride and fantastic principles. It makes the body a sea of humours, and those humours the seat of violence. By faring deliciously every day, men become senseless of the evils of mankind, inapprehensive of the troubles of their brethren, unconcerned in the changes of the world, and the cries of the poor, the hunger of the fatherless, and the thirst of widows.

And it is a perfect *destruction of wisdom*. A man that is wise in the morning, and fit for business, shall by indulging his appetites,

render himself, before the even-tide, unfit for every honest purpose ; the man by degrees falls away, and leaves a beast in his room.

AND now, after all this, do but consider, what a strange madness, and prodigious folly, possesses many men, that they love to swallow death and diseases and dishonour, with an appetite which no reason can restrain.

We expect that our servants should not dare to touch, what we have forbidden to them. We are watchful that our children should not swallow poisons and unwholesome nourishment ; we take care that they should be well mannered, and civil, and of fair demeanor. And we our selves desire to be, or at least to be accounted, wise ; and would infinitely scorn to be called fools. And we are so great lovers of health ; that we will buy it at any rate. And then for honour ; it is that which the children of men pursue with passion ; it is one of the noblest rewards of virtue, and the proper ornament of the wise and valiant.—And yet all these things are not valued or considered, when
intem-

intemperance calls upon the man, to act a scene of folly and madness, and unhealthiness, and dishonour.

We do to God, what we would desire severely to punish in our servants. We correct our children, for meddling with dangers, which themselves prefer before immortality. And tho' no man thinks himself fit to be despised, yet he is willing to make himself a beast, a sot, and a ridiculous monkey, with the folly and vapours of liquor. And when he is high in drink or fancy, proud as a Grecian orator in the midst of popular applause, at the same time he shall talk such unbecoming language, such mean low things, as may well become a changeling and a fool.

Every drunkard cloaths his head with a mighty scorn; and makes himself lower at that time, than the meanest of his servants. The boys can laugh at him, when he is led like a cripple, directed like a blind man, and speaks like an infant, imperfect noises, lisping with a faltering tongue, and an empty head, and a vain and foolish heart.

So

So cheaply does he part with his honour; for which he is ready to die, when it is disparaged by another, when himself destroys it, as bubbles perish by the breath of children.

Do not the laws of all wise nations mark the drunkard for a fool, with the meanest and most scornful punishment? And is there any thing in the world so foolish, as a man that is drunk? But, good God! what an intolerable frenzy hath seized upon great portions of mankind, that this folly should possess the greatest spirits, and the wisest men, the best company, the most sensible of the word honour, the most jealous of losing the shadow, and the most careless of the thing?

Is it not an horrid thing, that a wise, a learned, or a noble person, should dishonour himself as a fool, destroy his body as a murderer, lessen his estate as a prodigal, disgrace every good cause he is concerned in, and become an appellation of scorn, a scene of laughter and derision; and all, for the reward of forgetfulness and madness?

—for there are in immoderate drinking no other pleasures.

I shall conclude the whole with the saying of a wise man: He is fit to sit at the table of the Lord, and to feast with saints, who moderately uses the creatures which God hath given him;—but he that despises even lawful pleasures, shall not only sit and feast with God, but reign together with him, and partake of his glorious kingdom for ever.

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

The good and evil tongue.

[From Bishop TAYLOR'S Sermons.]

E P H E S. IV, 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

HE that had an ill memory, did wisely comfort himself, by reckoning the advantages he had by his forgetfulness. For by this means, he was secured against malice, and ambition ; for his anger went off with the short notice and observation of the injury : And he saw himself unfit for the businesses of other men, and for managing the cares and intrigues that vex the hearts of mankind. He also remembered this, that his pleasures in reading books were more frequent, while he remembered but little of yesterday's study, and to morrow the book is new, and
with

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with its novelties gives him fresh entertainment, while the retaining brain lays the book aside, and is full already. Every book is new to an ill memory, and one long book is a library, and its parts return fresh as the morning, which becomes a new day, tho' by the revolution of the same sun. Besides these, it brought him to tell truth for fear of shame, and in mere necessity made his speech little and his discourfings short; because the storehouse of his memory was soon exhausted, and the fountain of his knowledge grew quickly dry, and left running thro' forgetfulness.

He that is not eloquent and fair spoken, hath some of these comforts to plead, in excuse of his ill fortune, or defective nature. For if he can but hold his peace, he shall be sure not to be troublesome to his company, nor marked for lying, or become tedious with multiplicity of idle discourse. He shall be presumed wise, and often is so. He shall not feel the wounds of contention, nor be put to excuse an ill-taken saying, nor sigh for the folly of an irrecoverable word. If his fault be that he hath not spoken; that

can at any time be mended : but if he sinned in speaking, it cannot be unspoken again. Thus he escapes the dishonour of not being believed, and the trouble of being suspected. He shall never fear the sentence of judges, nor the decrees of courts, high reproaches, or the angry words of the proud, or the contradiction of the disputers of this world.

By these, and many other advantages, he that holds his peace, and he that cannot speak, may please themselves ; and they may at least have the rewards and effects of solitariness, if they miss some of the pleasures of society.

But by the use of the tongue God hath distinguished us from beasts ; and by the well or ill using it, we are distinguished from one another. And therefore tho' silence be innocent as death, harmless as a rose's breath to a distant passenger ; yet it is rather the state of death than of life. Language is the band of human intercourse, and makes men apt to unite in societies. By voices and conversation, by questions and answers, by counsel and reproof, by prayers and praises, we serve God's glory, and the necessities of men.

men. And by the tongue, our tables are made to differ from mangers, our cities from desarts, our churches from herds of beasts and flocks of sheep. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, spoken by the tongues of men and of angels. And the blessed spirits in heaven cease not night and day from singing glory to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever. And then our employment shall be glorious as our state, when our tongues shall to eternal ages sing praises to our Redeemer.

And therefore, since nature hath taught us to speak, and God requires it, and our thankfulness obligeth us, and our necessities engage us, and charity sometimes calls for it, and innocence is to be defended, and we are to speak in the cause of the oppressed, and open our mouths in the cause of God, and it is always a seasonable prayer that God would open our lips that our mouth may shew forth his praise; it concerns us to take care, that nature be changed into grace, necessity into choice, that while we speak the greatness of God, and minister to the needs
of

of our neighbour, and do the works of life and religion, of society and prudence, we may be fitted to bear a part in the songs of angels, when they shall rejoice at the feast of the *marriage supper of the lamb*.

But the tongue is a fountain both of bitter waters, and of pleasant; it sends forth blessing, and cursing; it praises God, and rails at men; it is sometimes set on fire, and then it puts whole cities in combustion; it is unruly, and no more to be restrained than the breath of a tempest; it is volatile and fugitive; reason should go before it, and when it does not, repentance comes after it; it was intended for an instrument of the divine praises, but is perverted to the purposes of sin and shame.

We are all naturally lovers of speech, more or less; and God reproves it not, provided that we be also wise and material, useful and prudent in our discourses. For since speech is for conversation, it ought to be charitable and profitable; it should be without sin, but not without profit and grace to the hearers; and then it is as God would have it. And this is the precept of my text:

First

first telling us what we should avoid, and then telling us what we should pursue; what our discourse *ought not* to be, and next what it *ought* to be. Therefore, I shall

- I. Discourse of the *vices* of the tongue, from the former part of my text: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.*
- II. Of its *duty* and proper employment, from the latter words; *But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

I. Let us consider the *vices* of the tongue: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.*—By this are forbidden all slander, calumny, and detraction; all vain, trifling, useless, and impertinent conversation.

As to the *quantity* of our discourse, there can be no certain measure, or just rule prescribed for it. It is as lawful, and sometimes as prudent, to tell a long story as a short; and two as well as one; and sometimes ten as well as two. All such discourses are to take their estimate by the

matter and the end, and can only be altered by their circumstances and appendages. Much speaking is sometimes necessary, sometimes useful, sometimes pleasant; and when it is none of all this, tho' it be tedious and imprudent, yet it is not always criminal.

There are certain ages and tempers that are more inclinable than others, to exceed in the measures of prudence and civil conversation. Young persons, and those who are old, are both of them concerned to separate from themselves the common reproach of their age; that modesty of speech be the ornament of the youthful, and a reserved discourse be the testimony of the old man's prudence. A young man, it hath been observed, is a talker for want of wit, and an old man for want of memory; for while he remembers the things of his youth, and not how often he hath told them in his old age, he grows in love with the trifles of his youthful days, and thinks his hearers must do so too; but he establisheth his folly, and by striving to bring reputation to his first days, he loses the honour of his last.

But

But this thing is considerable to further issues. For tho' no man can say, that much speaking is a sin, yet sin often accompanies it, or follows after it. For it is impossible but a long and frequent discourse must be served with many passions, and they are not always innocent. For he that loves to talk much; must scrape up materials of all kinds. Some talk themselves into anger; and some furnish out their discourses with the lives of others. They censure or detract, or else they flatter themselves, and tell their own stories with friendly circumstances, and pride creeps up the sides of the discourse. In short, self love and flattery, malice and spite, impertinence and vanity, usually wait upon much speaking. And the reward of it is, that the persons grow contemptible and troublesome, they engage in quarrels, and are concerned to answer exceptions. Some will mistake them, and some will not believe them, and it will be impossible that the mind should be perpetually present to perpetual talkers, but they will forget truth, and themselves, and their own discourses.

But in all the ways in which a man can do good to himself, or to his neighbour, he hath his liberty. He is only to secure his words from being criminal, and then he may reckon it lawful to discourse freely, whilst he can instruct, or even please his neighbour. He may discourse himself into a friendship, or help to preserve it. He may serve the works of art or nature ; of business, public or private. He may increase learning, or confirm his observations. He may serve the ends of civility. He may speak the praises of the Lord, by discoursing of any of the works of the creation. He may counsel or teach, reprove or admonish, inculcate a precept, or disgrace a vice.

But, generally, man's life is too short for long discourses. However we may be weary of some parts of our time, yet we are impatiently troubled when all is gone. And we must account for every portion of it. No man, therefore, ought to think it a light matter, that he spends his time in impertinent discourse ; or to be weary of that which flies away too fast, and cannot be recalled ; so as to use arts and devices to pass the time
away

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away in vanity, which might be better spent in the interests of eternity. Time is given us to repent in, to appease the divine anger, to prepare for and hasten to the society of angels, to stir up our devotions, to sorrow for our iniquities, and to sigh after and work for the restitution of our spiritual state. And the reward is very inconsiderable, that exchanges all this for the pleasure of impertinent discourse. And indeed this is an evil that cannot be avoided, by any excuse that can be made for words that are useless, tho' in their own nature they may be innocent. They are a throwing away something of that which is to be expended for eternity; and put on degrees of folly, according as they are tedious, and expensive of time to no good purposes.

Against these, prudence is no guard. Prudence, indeed, gives us rules, and proportions out our measures, and prescribes us cautions; but he that is given to talk, cannot be secured by all this. The volubility of his tongue is beyond the limitation of rules; and therefore it is, that folly breaks out on one side, and mischief often

enters at another. A little pride, and a great deal of vanity, will soon escape, whilst the man minds only his own discourse, and not that impertinent humour, which the severe man that stood by, did observe, and was ashamed of. Many men hate to be contradicted, or interrupted, or to be discovered in their folly. And some men, being a little conscious, and not striving to amend by silence, make it worse by talking of it. A long story of themselves; a tedious praise of another to do themselves advantage; a declamation against a sin, to undo the person, or oppress the reputation of their neighbour; unseasonable repetition of that which neither profits nor delights; trifling contentions about matters of no moment; anger and animosity, spite and rage, scorn and reproach, begun upon questions which concern neither of the parties; fierce disputations; strivings for what is past, and for what never shall be; these are the events of the loose and unwary tongue.

But so much may suffice for the *vices* of the tongue; I proceed,

Idly,

Idly, To consider its *duty* and proper employment:—*But that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.*

We must speak *that which is good*; any thing that may serve the ends of God and of our neighbour, in the measures of religion and usefulness. But it is here as in all other propositions of religion. God, to us who are in the body, and conducted by outward objects, and who understand nothing but what we feel, or is conveyed to us by the proportions of what we have or do,—hath given a religion that is fitted to our condition and constitution. And therefore when we are commanded to *love God*, by this *love* he understands *obedience*; when we are commanded to *honour God*, it is by reciting his praises, and *doing* things which cause reputation and honour: So here, when we are commanded to speak *that which is good*, it is instanced in *such* good things which are really profitable, and practically useful. And here the measures of God are especially by the proportions of our neighbour. And therefore, tho' speaking honourable things

of God be an employment that doth honour to our tongues and voices ; yet we must order them so, as may best profit our neighbour. It must be *for the use of edifying* ; such edification as is needful to every man's particular case : That is, we must so order our communication, that it be apt to instruct the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to recall the wanderer, to restrain the vicious, to comfort the disconsolate, to speak a word in season to every man's necessity, *that it may minister grace unto the hearers*,—something that may please and profit them, according as they shall need. All which may be reduced to three particulars ; namely,

To *instruct*,

To *reprove*,

And to *comfort*.

FIRST, our conversation must be for *instruction* ; it must be apt to teach. For since all our hopes on our part depend on our obedience to God, and conformity to our blessed Saviour, by whom our endeavours are sanctified and accepted ; and our weaknesses are pardoned, and all our obedience

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relies upon, and is encouraged and grounded in faith; and faith is founded naturally and primarily in the understanding;—it is not only reasonably to be expected, but we find it in experience, that in weak and ignorant understandings, there are no sufficient supports for the vigorousness of an holy life; there being nothing, or not enough, to warrant and strengthen great resolutions, and reconcile our affections to difficulties. Therefore he that instructs his brother in notices of faith, and spiritual doctrines, enables him towards the work and practices of an holy life. And tho' every argument which the spirit of God hath made and recorded in holy scripture, is of it self inducement great enough to endear obedience; yet it is not so in the event of things, to every man's infirmity and need: And therefore he that will comply with his brother's necessities, must endeavour by all means, to lay up treasures and notices of instruction in his brother's soul, that by some argument or other he may be met with, and rendered wise unto salvation.

THE

THE next instance of edification is *reproof*. We must, in proper season, and just measure, reprove our sinning brother. For the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy (says Solomon): We imitate the office of the great shepherd of souls, if we go to seek and save that which was lost. And it is a fearful thing to see a friend go to hell undisturbed, when the arresting him in his progress may possibly make him to return. This is a course that will change our vile inclination of judging and censuring others, into an act of charity; it will alter slander into piety, detraction into counsel, revenge into friendly and most useful offices.

He is a miserable man, whom none dares tell of his faults so plainly, that he may understand his danger. And he that is ashamed or impatient of reproof, can never become a good friend to any man.

It is no shame to be reprov'd, but to *deserve* it. And he that deserves it, and is resolv'd to do so still, shall increase his shame into confusion, and bring upon himself a sorrow bigger than the calamities of war, and plagues, and hospitals, and poverty.

He

He only is truly wise, and will be certainly happy that so understands himself and hates his sin, that he will not nurse it, but get to himself a reprovcr, whose warrant shall be liberty of access, whose thanks shall be amendment, and whose entertainment shall be obedience.

LASTLY: Our conversation must be apt to *comfort* the disconsolate; than which, in this life, men can feel no greater charity. For since half the duty of a christian consists in suffering; and the infinite variety of providence, and the perpetual adversity of chances, and the dissatisfaction and emptiness that is in things themselves, and the weariness and anguish of our spirit, do call us to the trial and exercise of patience, even in the days of sun-shine, and much more in the violent storms that shake our dwellings, and make our hearts tremble;—God hath sent some of his creatures into the world, whose office it is to refresh the sorrows of the poor, and to lighten the eyes of the disconsolate. He hath made some things, whose powers are chiefly ordained to comfort;
wine

wine and cordials, society, and variety; and time it self is checker'd with black and white: Stay but till to morrow, and your present sorrow will be weary, and will lie down to rest.

But this is not all: The third person of the holy Trinity, is known to us by the name and dignity of *the Holy Ghost the comforter*. And God glories in the appellation, that he is *the Father of mercies*, and *the God of all comfort*. And therefore to minister in the office, is to be like unto God, and to imitate the charities of heaven.

And God hath fitted mankind for it. Man most needs it; and he feels his brother's wants, by his own experience. And God hath given us speech, and the endearments of society, and pleasantness of conversation, and powers of seasonable discourse, arguments to allay the sorrow,—by abating our apprehensions, and taking out the sting, or exciting our hopes, or urging a precept, and reconciling our affections, and reciting the divine promises, or changing the affliction into duty, or making the burden less by comparing it with greater, or
by

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by proving it to be less than we deserve, and that it is so intended, and may become the instrument of virtue.

And certain it is, that as nothing can better do it, so there is nothing greater, for which God made our tongues, next to reciting his praises, than to minister comfort to a weary soul.

This is that communication which is useful indeed, for the satisfaction of our needs; and is the greatest and most holy charity: It is, most emphatically, *that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the bearers.*

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

On the goodness and condescension
of the divine providence.

[From Dr. CLAGETT's third volume.]

P S A L M VIII. 3, 4.

*When I consider thy heavens, the work of
thy fingers; the moon and the stars which
thou hast ordained:*

*What is man that thou art mindful of him;
and the son of man that thou visitest him?*

IF those who deny a providence, had any good grounds for their pretence; they would have reason to charge all divine worship with folly. It would be absurd to pray unto God, if we knew that he heard us not; or daily to praise him, if no day we receive any good from him. If he be not concerned in the good or evil that befalls us, nor regards either what we do or suffer, but leaves us to chance to be happy or miserable; it would be unaccountable and unreasonable to worship him.

Some

Some have imagined, that it is inconsistent with the quiet and happiness of God, to attend to the innumerable passages, and intricate affairs of human life; that a multitude of business would molest him, and perpetually interrupt his repose.—Which is measuring the power of the creator, by the weakness of the creature; and drawing conclusions concerning God, from the insufficiency we find in our selves: that is, because we cannot attend to a great many things at once, without uneasiness, and solitude, and distraction; because we are apt to be tired with multiplicity of business, and many times want means to bring our designs to pass; and meet with crosses and disappointments in one business, while we are attending upon another; therefore, they suppose, neither can God, who is infinitely wise and powerful, govern and dispose, and over-rule the affairs of men, without the like trouble to himself; as if we might fancy that to be true of God, who is infinitely perfect, which is true of us, because of our imperfections.

Others have suggested, that the high
dignity,

dignity, and infinite majesty of God, makes it unbecoming him, and unworthy of him, to mind the affairs of men ; that he would stoop beneath himself with great indecency, if he should be any way concerned in the good or evil of things infinitely below him ; and therefore, that the supposition of a providence is as dishonourable to his greatness, as it is inconsistent with his happiness.

Now we must acknowledge indeed, that there is an infinite distance between God and us ; between his majesty and greatness and infinite perfections on the one side, and our finite natures on the other. There is no place for comparison. So that one of these two conclusions is obvious enough to be made ; either that we are so unworthy of his providence, that he takes no notice of us, and then it were folly and presumption to worship him ; or else, if he doth observe, and govern us, and by his providence interpose in all things that befall us, that we are then, in consideration of his infinite perfections, and incomparable greatness and majesty, to acknowledge his goodness and beneficence, with most humble and thankful praises.

The

The former is the conclusion of the sensual and voluptuous ; the latter, of religious persons, as particularly, of the psalmist in this place, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ?*

And now the question is, which of these two conclusions is most reasonably inferred, from the consideration of our meanness, in comparison to the greatness of God ; whether that there is a providence at all, or a wonderful goodness in providence ; whether we are quite to disbelieve and deny it, or gratefully to acknowledge it.

I shall shew, that the latter inference is to be made, and by no means the former. For from God's infinite greatness and majesty it doth not follow, that he disregards or disdains us his creatures, who are so very mean in comparison of him ; but still it holds true, that he exercises a kind and careful providence over us.

There are three evidences, particularly, of a good providence over man : namely, *The dominion that is given him over all the*

other creatures in the world. The plentiful provision that is made for his well-being in the world. And the divine interposul in the government of the rest of the world for his benefit.

THE First argument is, *man's dominion over all the creatures upon this earth*; which, as it was given him, when he was first made, so hath ever been continued to him. And this dignity of man, to which he is raised, I mention in the first place, because it was the particular observation of the psalmist here, upon which he concluded, that in that measure of respect, which we have from God, who are dwellers upon earth, we come near to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places: *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* We are princes in respect of the rest of this lower world: *Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas.*

And

And since man is constituted lord of this inferior world, that is, is set over the animals of the visible creation; this shews that we are regarded of God, next to the inhabitants of the invisible world, even with a care and respect answering that high station God hath assigned to us in this world, and suitable to our sovereignty over the rest of the creatures.

AND this most evidently appears, by the Second testimony I mentioned of the goodness of providence towards man, which is indeed a very sensible proof of it; and that is, *The plentiful provision God hath made for our welfare and happiness in this world.* For as God hath crowned us with glory and honour, that is, made us princes in respect of the other creatures, so accordingly we are honourably provided for by his liberal hand; and we have a magnificent and princely allowance from him, for the support of our dignity.

And this bountiful goodness of God to mankind, St. Paul takes notice of to us, where he tells us, that God hath given us *rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness:* And

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again, that he giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

This is certain; God who made man to have dominion over the work of his hands, hath placed him in this lower world (which he hath so vastly replenished with the effects of his wisdom, power, and goodness) to enjoy the benefits of the creation, that man might be delighted with the order and beauty, and serve himself with the plenty of all things. And with exceeding delight did the psalmist contemplate the sundry kinds of beings put in subjection to man, with which the world is stored; as likewise the plenteous abundance of air, and water, and light, and food, and all requisites for his subsistence: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches, so is the great and wide sea.*

And therefore surely we should make some true judgment, of the care of the divine providence over us, did we duly survey the whole creation within our view, and consider the great variety of beings of which it consists, and wherewith it is furnished and adorned. This seems to be one great

great part of the design of the first chapter of Genesis; which doth not barely describe the glory of the creation, but presents us with a lively account of the divine goodness to mankind, for whose use it was so much intended. For after that, at God's word, the several kinds of things had sprung into being, *Let there be light, and day and night; let there be heavens and earth, sea and land; let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind; let there be sun and moon and stars; let the waters bring forth fish, the earth also beasts and fowl; and let these things be fruitful and multiply:* To what end was this vast provision of beings, why also was the creation of them so particularly and orderly recounted, but to let us see the immense bounty of God to man? For *God saw that all this was very good; and God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

And this was one main spring of the psalmist's transport, in admiration of God's good providence towards man: *O Lord, our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth?* How full is the earth of the testimonies of thy power and wisdom? and it is as full of the tokens of thy goodness to man, for whose sake they were created: *For the earth God hath given to the children of men.*

THIRDLY, The divine care over man, is also evident from hence, that *it is for our sakes he interposes in the government of the rest of the world, that he hath given for our use.* For his providence extendeth to all the parts of the creation, in which our benefit was intended; to things without reason, and without sense, and without life. When God first put natural causes into their order of working, he did not leave them to produce a necessary series of effects, from the beginning to the end of the world; but continues to over-rule them, as in his wisdom and goodness he sees expedient for the good of mankind. *He sendeth the springs into the vallies, which run among the hills: They give drink to every beast*

beast of the field. He causeth grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of men. He appointeth the moon for seasons; and the sun knoweth his going down. That is, God governs natural causes, for producing what effects he pleases. But, doth God take care for these? Is he employed in the ordering of things, that have no sense, or no reason? Is not all this for the sake of man, whom he hath set in the world, to enjoy the benefit of his providence, over things irrational and inanimate?

And therefore our Saviour, arguing against the distrust of his disciples, useth this way to convince them: *If God feeds the fowls of the air, and cloaths the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven; shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith?* That is, If his providence be over these things, because they are for the service of men; can you think he will neglect you, for whose sake he still interposeth to preserve them? It is not *of it self* worthy of God's counsel, whether the season of the year be barren or fruitful, whether the winds bring a healthy or pestilential air; and yet he over-rules

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second causes, not for the sake of the things themselves, but upon man's account, for whose sake they were created. Therefore sometimes for the reward of a righteous nation, sometimes for a testimony of his patience and forbearance of the wicked, he sendeth healthful and fruitful seasons; at other times *a fruitful land maketh he barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*

The motions of nature in our earthly world, the air we breathe in, the soil we till, the weather, and such like, are without doubt of themselves below the consideration of the infinite majesty of God; but yet, with reference to that influence which they have upon our good or evil, God is pleased to interpose and concern himself in these things, and disdains not to govern and over-rule them: Which shews his condescension with regard to us; and in what account he holds human nature.

AND yet there is another argument of a very careful providence over mankind still behind, which is beyond the three instances of it I have insisted on; and that is, God's wise and gracious method *for the reformation of mankind*, and for saving us from the
worst

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worst of evils, *our sins and vices.* For this certainly doth of all things shew that he is *mindful of us,* and that he *visits us.*

When the whole world lay in wickedness, and were corrupted in their ways; God, in his infinite mercy, sent his *only begotten Son* into the world, to proclaim forgiveness of sin to all mankind upon their repentance, to promise eternal life to the keeping of his commandments, and to offer himself up a sacrifice to the justice of God.

Which redemption of our nature by the Son of God, is, of all other testimonies of a divine care of us to convert and save us from our sins, infinitely the chiefest. For *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that we might live thro' him.* And therefore, with how raised a devotion of soul should we use the psalmist's words on that account, *What is man that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that thou visitest him?*

WHEREFORE, after all that hath been discoursed on this subject, this plain inference is to be made, that we are infinitely obliged to return our most hearty *thanks* to God, for vouchsafing to regard us, to rule

us by his laws, and by all the methods of his providence to interpose for our welfare in this world, and to prepare us for eternal happiness in the next; to love and adore the most high God, for his infinite condescension; to shew forth our thankfulness for a gracious providence over us, by daily praises of our bountiful creator and preserver, upon whom we so much depend, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, with all the comforts of it.

BUT then, our thankful sense of God's providence, and mindfulness of us, ought to be expressed also by *living* as always in his sight, and therefore by putting our selves upon doing the things that please him, and by being careful never to offend him, seeing we have so great a witness of our behaviour. The consideration of the divine providence will naturally have an influence upon our lives and practices; it is a spur to virtue in doing and suffering well, that we perform our part under the eye and observation of an infinite majesty.

Since God condescends to take notice of us, we should endeavour to deserve well in such a presence. This thought, that his

eye is always upon us, should make us have a great regard to all our actions, to see that we do things that will bear so great a witness and judge, and will gain his approbation and rewards. And let us be sure to learn those virtues, which the firm belief of a wise and good providence watching over us, should more particularly engage us to practise; namely, trust in God, contentment in all conditions, patience in afflictions, and a full resignation and submission to the divine will.

LASTLY, There is one instruction more, by no means to be omitted, which we must learn from what hath been said concerning God's good providence; and that is this: The sense of his stooping so low, to take care of us, and provide for us, should correct in us all *pride*, and self conceit, and insolent contempt of other men; and should teach us what an excellent thing is that humble charity of condescending to do good.

In the true account of things, he that is more kind and beneficial to the meanest persons, than another is, is of the class of that man's betters; and will be so owned, by the great judge of truth, at the
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last day. And the reason of it is plain enough; for such charity is an imitation of the condescending goodness of God. Therefore let a man not think highly of himself, for the sake of any worldly pre-eminence; but consider himself as indebted to God for every thing he enjoys: And then he will conclude, that he cannot be worthy of praise, without being himself a benefactor to others.

But, shall wit, or riches, or honours, or strength, or beauty, make us believe, that we are in a condition to scorn the meanest person upon earth, or to think him beneath our consideration, our respect, or our charity? They are indeed these things that infect us with pride, that procure flattery from others, and make us think highly of our selves. But what are we, with all this vanity about us, to the peerless majesty of God, who condescendeth to take notice of us, and is mindful of the lowest, as well as of the highest of us? What is man, not only the poor, the despised, the ignorant, and the most unhappy man to see to,—but what is man with all his glory, and riches, and greatness, and wit, and
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knowledge? What is a nobleman, a king, an emperor, what is the greatest man upon earth, that God should be mindful of him?

If therefore, whosoever thou art, thou makest no use at all of thy gifts, and wealth, and honour, and high place in the world, for the benefit of thy inferiors; but thy singular advantages do rather minister to haughtiness and swelling, and serve only to nourish a lofty and foolish opinion of thy self, and to puff thee up; then go thy way, and give over thy pride and vanity, and learn to be wise, and think that doing of good to the meanest persons will be thy greatest honour; for in this thou wilt do what is something like the goodness of God, who infinitely condescendeth to take notice of thee.

And let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the rich man in his riches, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the great man in his titles, honour, and power; but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord, who dwelleth on high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth.

S E R M O N VI.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive
our debtors.

[From Dr. CLAGETT's fourth volume.]

MATT, VI. 12.

*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our
debtors.*

ST. LUKE, in delivering this petition of the Lord's prayer, in his gospel, expresseth it thus, *forgive us our "sins."* And in the form which we commonly use, we say, *forgive us our "trespasses."* And it is all one which of these words we use, *debts*, or *sins*, or *trespasses*; because in this respect they must all have the same meaning: For what is a *trespass* against God, but only the doing something which he has forbidden? And this is likewise a *sin*; for *sin* (as the apostle says) *is the transgression of the law*. And this same may also be well called

a *debt* ; for by transgressing the law of God in any point, we become obnoxious to him, we owe him satisfaction for the injury, either by making reparation, or (since that cannot be done by us) by suffering the punishment due to our transgression.

OF this petition I shall speak under the two heads of *God's forgiving us*, and *our forgiving others*.

As to the *former*, I intend only to suggest two or three considerations, which may make us offer this petition to God in good earnest. As,

FIRST, that to this purpose *we should set our sins before our eyes, at convenient times, as particularly as we can*. For it is almost impossible, that the general desire of pardon should be earnest and sincere, where there is seldom or never any particular sense and acknowledgment of sins. General propositions do not affect a man's mind, but by virtue of the particulars that are contained under them.

For instance ; if a man says, that he believes in God, but never goes farther than
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the general assent to this article, that there is a God, this shall have no influence upon his will and affections. For that which makes this persuasion apt to work upon us, are such particular deductions as these: He is holy and just, and therefore an hater of sin: He is faithful and true, and therefore will punish it: He is every where present, and therefore he sees me in all that I do, therefore I ought to fear him and regard him where ever I am, and eschew evil, and do that which is good.

In like manner, it shall affect no man to any good purpose, to say within himself that he is a sinner, if he has no sense of his particular transgressions. But he that argues with himself in this manner; This offence I have committed against God, and that commandment of his I have violated, —means something; and knows what he says, when he confesseth himself to be a sinner; and knows what he desires, when he asks God's pardon of his sins: and to the sense he has of the nature and aggravations of his sins, his earnest desire of forgiveness will be proportionable.

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IN the next place, To make us use this petition in good earnest, we ought *to be sensible of the nature of sin*, as it is a transgression of God's law, and a violation of his will. I do not mean that it is enough to have a true notion of this, but we must be heartily affected with it; considering well that we have broken his law, who is the sovereign of the world, and hath an absolute right to govern us; and withal have abused the clemency of the infinitely good God; and have exposed ourselves to the just anger of an almighty being; and that in all things, whereby we have sinned, we have neither regarded the goodness, nor the power, nor the presence of God; we have done that which is unworthy and base; and have thereby incurred infinite danger.

Which things are so plain, that they cannot but be understood; so evidently true, that they cannot be denied; and so interesting, that he who considers them as he ought, cannot but be greatly affected with them: and it is the being thus affected, that qualifies a man to ask forgiveness as he ought to do.

WE are to consider, again ; *Who we are, that acknowledge our selves to be sinners,* namely, such who, upon innumerable accounts, were obliged to obedience, in gratitude for numberless favours received from the bounty and goodness of God ; for being daily preserved and sustained by his providence ; for receiving all the comforts of life from him ; for his patience and long suffering towards us, notwithstanding many provocations ; but especially (as that is our case) for having been washed in the laver of regeneration, and been made partakers of the blessings of the new covenant.

We have named the name of Christ, and yet have not departed from iniquity : We have eaten of the Lord's body, and drank of his cup : We have known the love of God, and the suffering of Christ : We have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come : We have been led and guided by his holy spirit. When a son turns rebel to an indulgent father, or a friend proves false to his friend ; we know then how to aggravate the case. And now put these, and all the like instances together ; and how great are the
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aggravations of any wilful sin we commit against God? And what punishments do our iniquities deserve? And then what reason have we to say, Lord, forgive us our sins? And how can he not say it in good earnest, who understands these things, and considers them? And if the common aggravations of sin make a man's guilt so great; how much greater will it grow, when every man's conscience hath discharged its proper office, and checked him for his relapses, his frequent violation of vows and promises of better obedience, and all the particular circumstances of guilt, which make his sins to be out of measure sinful.

So much concerning *God's forgiving us*. The next thing to be considered is, the condition thereof, *our forgiving others*.

To forgive others is so hard a matter, that is, to do it thoroughly and heartily, without retaining any revengeful thoughts, any stiffness or grudging, any evil desires or wishes; this (I say) is so hard, that our Lord hath tied the obligation thereto upon us, as fast as that of any other duty whatsoever; and in some respects he hath

tied it faster. He hath not only given us a special law concerning it, but he hath caused us to acknowledge it daily in our prayers; and that, at the same time when we desire forgiveness of God our selves, and desire to be forgiven as we forgive others.

And now that you may see the utmost strength of this obligation, I shall add, that we ought not to esteem it so difficult to forgive, as it appears at first, and as most men make it; because, there is much more reason why we should forgive others, than why we should expect that God will forgive us.

It happens very frequently amongst men, that those who are injured gave some provocation beforehand. Where wrong is complained of, the fault is often on both sides, though more perhaps on the one side than on the other. But this cannot be said, to excuse our sins against God. He never did us any harm, nor can we lay any matter of accusation against him. Now should it not be an easy thing for us to forgive, who stand in need to be forgiven, not only by God, but by our neighbour too? And yet
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it is commonly observed, that they who are most ready to do injuries, are the most backward to forgive them, but in reason they should be most forward.

Moreover ; When a man is wronged upon a provocation given, yet the injury that is done to him is not capable of those aggravations, which his own sins against God are loaded with. For no man is or can be so obliged to another, as every man is to God. Therefore let us suppose, that another man hath requited us evil for good, which is the highest kind of aggravation that one man's sins against another can admit ; yet what is the benefit, which we can pretend to be the authors of to him, to those innumerable blessings which God conferred upon our selves ? Did he not give us our being ? Doth he not daily preserve us ? Hath he not given his only son to die for us ; and promised us an everlasting reward in the kingdom of heaven ? Are not these benefits infinitely beyond any thing, or all those things put together, for which we may pretend to deserve well of our neighbour, if they were ten thousand times greater than they are ? And therefore we desire of God

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to forgive us greater sins and trespasses, which we have committed against God, than we can forgive another.

More particularly; The measure of our forgiveness may be estimated from the following instances.

First of all, We desire to be forgiven *all* the sins that we have been guilty of: We would not have God enter into judgment with us for any of them, much less for the greatest of all. And therefore, if we forgive, as we desire to be forgiven, it is very plain, that we must also forgive all, even the greatest wrongs, that are done to us by our neighbour, without reserving ill will to his person, upon the account of any, tho' the greatest affront and injury that we ever received from him.

But, alas, how contrary is our practice to our prayers? We have much ado, and it is not without much struggling with our selves, that we can settle our passions, that we can clear our selves of spiteful and malicious thoughts, when we have received a very small and inconsiderable wrong. What hurt is done to us in comparison, if when we are in health and at ease, when we are
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under no straits, and in no distrefs, when we live in plenty, and in good security ; what great hurt, I fay, is done to us by a difgraceful word, by a spiteful infinuation, or a bafe reflection ? How many bleffings have we about us, to yield us good comfort, which contribute incomparably more to our welfare, than fo petty an affault can do to our harm ? And yet we have much ado, to keep our hearts from boiling into refentment and difdain againft the injurious man, though he hath done us no mischief that deferves our confideration.

But if we overcome our felves upon thefe trifling accounts, and are in charity with the wrong doer, this is yet but the very leaft part of our duty ; for we were obliged to forgive him, though the injury had been never fo great. But this is what we ufe to fay upon fuch occafions : If it had not been fo violent an affront, fo undoing a flander, fo intolerable a wrong, I could have paffed it by, I could eafily have admitted terms of reconciliation ; but this is beyond all fufferance, and I cannot bring my felf to be in charity with fo great an enemy, or to forbear revenge.

But now that which I say is this : Would we have God thus to deal with us ? Do we desire him to forgive us only our least and most excusable offences, and to treasure up wrath against us for the greatest of all ! Or rather, do we not intend to beg his pardon of the greatest, with the greatest concern ? But then let us have a care that we do not baffle this intention, by our revengefulness upon receiving great injuries from others ; but let us forgive them all, if we desire that God should do so by us.

Again : We desire to be forgiven *speedily*. We would not have the wrath of God to rest upon us, for a day, or a moment ; lest we should be cut off in his just displeasure. Now it is well, if most men can obtain of themselves, to forgive after some time, when they have had leisure to cool, and begin to be tired with their own anger and passionate resentments. But if we would forgive, as we desire to be forgiven, we must make haste to be reconciled, we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath.

Very unfit therefore are we for God's forgiveness, when our hearts swell with malice and disdain, and fret with bitter and revengeful

vengeful thoughts. We are committing daily offences against God, and ought therefore to pray for God's pardon every day. In order to qualify us for this therefore, we ought also to forgive others every day, even though they should every day give us occasion for it. For if we would be in God's grace to day, we must not continue in ill will to our brother till to morrow.

Further: We desire that the *aggravations* of our sins may not be considered against us; that is, as the psalmist expresseth it, that God would not *enter into judgment with us*; that he would make all abatements in our behalf that can be made.

And this is what we ought to do towards those that have injured us; we should admit of any excuse that is offered; that is, we should not forgive hardly. We must not only be free of a revengeful spirit, but we must give over aggravating the offence against that man whom we have forgiven. For indeed, how can we be truly said to have forgiven that man, whom yet we seek to represent under as bad a character as his case will bear?

Again: When we desire to be forgiven, we do not only desire that the punishment
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may be remitted, and God's anger against us may cease, but we desire this also; that he would be *reconciled* to us, that he would *love* us, and do us *good*. And therefore we ought, in like manner, not only to banish revenge, and put off indignation and displeasure against our adversary; but we ought also to love him, and be ready to do good to him instead of evil, and to desire his welfare in this world, and in the world to come, and be forward our selves to promote it.

AND now, we should do well to make a stand, and consider well with our selves, how we practise this precept of our religion. I suppose, ever since we knew what religion and prayer meant, we have every day said the Lord's prayer. In this we pray unto God, to *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*. Do we never, when we use this petition, harbour malice, revenge, and hatred in our hearts? If we do, we pray not for, but against our selves; and bring our selves hereby under a necessity of saying this prayer back again, and desiring God to forgive us, not as we forgive others, because we do not perhaps forgive them at all;—but that he would
forgive

forgive us more and better than we do to others; that is to say, that he would please to pardon us, not in the method that he himself hath appointed, but according to a way of our own devising: Than which, what greater insolence and affront can be offered unto the divine majesty?

Let us not then go about to excuse our selves before God, as if there were no living in the world without contention, strife, and debate, and animosities, because the occasions of these things are often multiplied upon us; but let us for our own sakes, for the forgiveness of our sins, set about the exercise of this grace and virtue.

Our Lord very well knew, that our life, and the business thereof, would administer frequent matter of debate, and hard words, and bitter thoughts; and therefore he hath provided us a daily remedy, against this mischief of conversation; namely, that prayer wherein we pray for *daily forgiveness*, as well as for *daily bread*; and for the former, upon no other condition, than that on our parts there be none in the world, but whom we wish well to, and to whom we are ready to grant forgiveness, and to do them good.

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But one thing more: If forgiving of wrongs be necessary for our being forgiven of God; what then shall we say of those, that do wrongs and injuries to their neighbours? Is it not a gross abuse of God's majesty and patience, for that man to desire God to forgive him, as he forgives the injuries he has received from others, who is hurtful and injurious himself? Whoever uses the petition, may well be supposed a person that provokes and hurts no body, and to be one, who exerciseth himself to have a conscience void of offence.

To conclude: Hath another man affronted or wronged us? We do our selves greater injury by not forgiving him, than he hath done us by the offence. Nay further, We do our selves more harm by not forgiving him, than it is possible for us to do to him: For we make that wretched use of his fault, as to debar our selves hereby from the forgiveness of God; which we certainly do, if we suffer his offence to breed in us rancorous and evil thoughts against him.

But, because he hath despised and insulted us, shall we be revenged on him to our own destruction? If he hath done us wrong, he

hath hurt his own soul ; but shall we therefore destroy ours too, by shutting up the mercies of God against our selves ? What a madness is that ?

Let us therefore carry these words of my text, always in our hearts, wherever we go ; that they may be present, as present with us, as if they were inscribed in all places, where we have any affairs and business ; as if they were graven upon the palms of our hands, or we wore them on our garments. Let this petition be our daily address unto God, whenever we are in danger of being tempted to anger and ill will ; and when we are so tempted, let us remember, that we have then an occasion of praying effectually for God's pardon, in these words, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

S E R M O N VII.

Excuses for absenting from the holy sacrament.

[From KETTLEWELL on the Sacrament.]

MATT. XXII. 2, 3.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come.

THE worthy receiving of the holy sacrament, is a duty, which our blessed Lord has strictly enjoined; and from which we may hope to reap very great benefits. It might well be expected therefore, that all who would do service, either to their Saviour, or to themselves, should readily join therein, whensoever an opportunity is offered for the same. And so, it is probable, all who pretend to serious religion would; were it not that they have some exceptions
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in their own minds against it, which till they are removed, make all discourses of the duty, or usefulness of this holy feast, to fall without effect, and persuade them, that however necessary or advisable it may be to others, yet it is not so to them, who have so just an hindrance to excuse or discourage them from being present at it.

To give therefore this duty as fast hold upon our consciences as may be, I shall at this time endeavour to remove several of those hindrances, and to take off such pleas, as are usually offered to excuse, and keep men back from complying with it.

And those which I shall principally treat of, are these four :

I. Men are sometimes hindred from the sacrament, because they think *it is a presumption in us to approach unto it; and therefore, say they, an humble man should abstain from it.*

II. Because *many good people are seldom or never seen at it, and therefore they may be good too (they think), and have good company, if they keep away from it.*

III. Because *others perhaps, who are unworthy of it, are admitted to join in it.* And,

IV.

IV. Because *therein they are to promise concerning every sin which they find themselves guilty of, that they will no more commit it; and this promise some dare not make, because they fear they shall not keep it.*

These are such things as do sometimes hinder persons from partaking in this holy ordinance; but indeed they ought in no case to be their hindrance, from doing their Saviour and their own souls this service; as will more fully appear in treating of the particulars. And,

I. ONE thing which hinders some persons from coming to this holy feast, is, *because it looks like an high presumption in us to approach thereunto, and therefore they think an humble man ought in all modesty to abstain from it.*

But to satisfy this plea, we need only to observe, that it can be no presumption to come when we are called, and to do what we are bidden. If we should intrude of our own accord, and come uninvited, we might be too bold indeed, and very rudely arrogant. But when we are particularly sent to, and called to come, especially if there be, as in this case there is, great earnestness and importunity

portunity in the invitation, it is the part of an humble man to comply therewith, and he is not guilty of the least shew of arrogance or presumption in so doing. There is civility shewn sometimes in accepting, as well as in offering kindneses; and it is but reasonable to receive what God would have us; yea, indeed, to accept any thing from any other of our superiors. So that in all civility, we were bound to come, had we nothing more than a friendly invitation.

But besides that, God hath expressly enjoined, and peremptorily required it of us: So that now we must approach to this holy table, not only out of civility and respect, but also out of obedience to his holy commandment. And true humility is no hindrance, but the greatest furtherance in the world to such a service; it being not the part of a presumptuous, but of a truly humble man, to do what he is bidden, and to please those whom he is bound in duty to obey.

It is no presumption then to come to the holy sacrament when we are called, and to do what we are bidden.

But it is a very great boldness and presumption

sumption to stay away, and leave what he bids us do *undone*. He is no proud man, who accepts a kindness when it is offered, and he is earnestly invited to it; but *he* may shew pride and haughtiness enough, who slight and despises it. And *he* is no bold man that does what he is commanded; but *he* shews boldness and presumes *indeed*, that dares venture to transgress it. There are no men so bold and presumptuous with God, as they who will act what he forbids, and refuse to do what he enjoins them. So that it is truly an high presumption to stay away when he has expressly charged us, both upon our duty, and our love for him, to join in the holy communion.

As for those then, who are hindered from the holy sacrament, by the fear of being too bold and presumptuous with almighty God, in coming to a feast which hath such height of privilege and honour in it; they are hindered without any just ground, and kept back by that which ought not to hinder them. For it is no presumption, but the part of humble men, to come when they are called, and to do what they are bidden; but it is a very great boldness and presumption,

sumption, to stay away, and leave it undone. A

II^d PLEA, whereby several persons are wont to excuse their not coming to the holy sacrament is, *because many good people are seldom or never seen thereat; and therefore they may be good too, and have good company, if they keep away from it.*

Now as for those who urge this in excuse, it would be proper for them to consider, that when they are inquiring after their own duty, in any matter, it is no right way to ask, whether others practise it, but whether our Lord has any where commanded, that it should be practised. For mens practice is not always fully answerable to their own duty, and so is a very false rule whereby to judge of ours. All persons have their faults, and tho' no good men can continue in any wilful ones, yet will even they be subject to several ignorant slips, and unadvised miscarriages. But when at any time they either wilfully break any commandment, or ignorantly mistake it; that is no warrant for us to do so likewise. So that if we would truly understand whe-

ther we are bound to communicate, our way is not to inquire whether others do it, but whether our Lord has any where enjoined it to be done; for if he has, we are certainly obliged to communicate, whether others do it or no.

And if any good people keep away from the blessed sacrament, *that* is no part of their goodness, but their blemish; so that therein they are not to be imitated. For we have God's exprefs command to come, and *that* we cannot flight, without being disobedient, and guilty of a plain transgression. We are called therein, to shew our selves thankfully mindful of our blessed Saviour's death, and of all that he has done and suffered for our sakes; and this call we cannot deny, without proclaiming our selves most shamefully unthankful towards him. We are summoned in, to profess repentance and amendment of all our sins; and this we cannot honestly decline, if really we are resolved to leave them. We are invited to declare our selves at peace with all our brethren, and reconciled to all the christian world; and this invitation no man can fairly refuse, who in very deed is in charity with all men, and is
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become an hearty friend to them. God's laws peremptorily enjoin us, and the things therein implied do strictly oblige us, to partake of the holy sacrament, when we have an offer of a fit opportunity for the same; so that every man who makes conscience of his duty, and regards obedience to his Lord, must be careful to join therein. And it is the greatest means of a good life, and obligation to amendment that can be prescribed; so that every one who has a just care of his soul, and is earnestly desirous of virtuous improvements, will seek to be admitted to it. A good man's duty binds him, and the care of his own soul engages him to communicate; so that there is neither virtue nor prudence shewn in staying away, nor is it any part of goodness to neglect it. And therefore if any persons, otherwise good, are seldom seen at the blessed sacrament, *that* is no part of their goodness, but their fault, so that therein they are not to be imitated.

As for those then, who urge this in excuse for their not coming to the holy sacrament, because several good people are seldom, or never seen at it, the answer to them in short is this: In judging our duty, we

must not take our measures from other mens practice, but from our blessed Lord's commandments; since, if they disobey any precept, that is no excuse to us, nor gives us any warrant for company's sake to disobey likewise. And as for the sacrament in particular, if any good people keep away from it, that is no part of their goodness, so that therein they are not to be imitated. Nay, if they continue in this neglect, after their consciences are rightly instructed, and informed about it, they cease to be good, and are guilty of a criminal neglect, which will not be forgiven them, but upon the same terms as all other known sins are, that is, upon their *repentance* thereof. If they stay away out of ignorance and mistake, all they can expect, is, to be pitied, but not to be commended for their omission; and if out of *wilfulness*, after their conscience has been set right therein,—they will be severely punished, unless they are timely reclaimed from it: And therefore their example therein, is very far from being fit to be imitated by us. A

III^d CAUSE which people are wont to
assign,

assign, for their absenting themselves from this holy feast, is, *because others, who are unworthy of it, are admitted to join in it.*—

Tho' this be a very good thing, yet they fear they should give offence by doing it in ill company; and how worthy soever they may be in themselves, they are afraid lest they should be defiled by the unworthiness of others. So that unless they can receive the sacrament in an unmixed company, and only with the pure and true believers, they think best to stay away, and not receive it at all.

But that they may not be kept back by this hindrance, I shall observe to them,— That they ought not to be forward in judging any others unworthy to communicate, lest they be mistaken in their judgment of them. For every penitent man, who is fully *resolved* to leave all his sins, is really worthy to receive the blessed sacrament; and whether the person whom they think unworthy be so resolved or no, is very hard for them to judge, since no man can see into another's heart, and only God and his own soul are privy to it. When he comes to the Lord's table, every communicant pro-

feffeth to repent, and promifeth to lead a new life thenceforward; and when he fo-lemnly declares he is thus resolved, it is hard for another perfon, who cannot fee into his foul, to fay he is not, but is ftill impenitent. Tho' all good men therefore may be free in judging of themfelves, yet ought they to be very wary how they pafs a judgment on the unworthinefs of others. They muft not be forward to pronounce of it, becaufe it is hard for them to know it; fo that when they give fentence againft their brethren in this point, it is ventroufly done, and they are liable to be deceived therein.

Befides; When fome others, who, as they have great caufe to think, are unworthy, do receive the holy facrament; yet ought not that to hinder them from receiving it too. Our bufinefs fhould not be, to move queftions and difputes about the preparednefs of others, but to be careful duly to prepare our felves; and when once we are fitly qualified for it, we ought to come whether they be fo or no. Their unworthinefs will have all its effect upon themfelves, but will not hinder our acceptance, nor ought to put us by, from doing both our bleffed Saviour, and
our

our own souls this service. For one man shall not bear another's, but every one his own burden. A

IVth THING, which keeps back several from the holy sacrament, tho' both in duty to their Saviour, and in tenderness to their own souls, they are most strictly bound to frequent the same, is, *because therein they are to promise concerning every sin which they find themselves guilty of, that they will no more commit it; and this promise they dare not make, because they fear they shall not keep it.*

Now as for these persons, they would do well to consider, that if this be a sufficient hindrance, to keep them from this ordinance, it is equally so to keep them from prayers too, nay from the whole christian profession. For God will not hear their prayers for the pardon of any sin, till they repent of it, and resolve within themselves, and make him faithful promises, that they will never more commit the same. And in order to be admitted into the fellowship of Christ's church, men are first to renounce the devil and all his works, and promise to keep God's holy will and commandments. If we
stick

stick at these promises, then we must scruple saying our prayers, and bid adieu to all religion.

But more particularly, to those who are afraid of the holy sacrament upon this account, I have these two things to offer:

1. *Promise this amendment, and keep it, and then the doubt is answered.*

2. *Tho' after some time they should forget themselves, and break it in some instances, yet still they have the benefit of repentance afterwards.*

1. *I would advise them to promise this amendment, and to keep it, and the doubt is answered.* When the objection against promising, is only the danger of performing, when they both *can*, and *ought* to perform it; it is an objection that lies only against *themselves*, in a suspicion that they will be wanting to their own bounden duty and service. And that is better removed, by their own care faithfully to discharge it, than by any thing that can be said. They ought to perform it, and if they will, by God's grace they may do it; and therefore let them be careful to do that, and this difficulty is at an end.

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They ought, I say, to perform this amendment, which they promise to almighty God, to leave every sin which they have formerly committed. God will not forgive us any wilful offences, whilst we persist impenitent, and continue to repeat them; but requires first, on our part, that we forsake and amend the same. It is no indifferent matter, that is left to our own choice, whether we will leave our sins or no; but the thing must of necessity be done, if ever we hope to appease God, or to go to heaven. So that we must not be *less* forward to promise,—for that is our duty; but more careful to perform.

And as they *ought* to perform this amendment, which they promise to almighty God, so by his grace they *may* perform it, if they *will*, and have a mind so to do. When at this feast, they say they will never commit this or that sin any more, according as God has required, they say not that they will never be *surprized* into it, but that they will never act it *wilfully*, that is, when they see it, and are aware of it; or, if at any time they do fall into it again, that they will not persist therein, but amend it; repentance
always

always going along, and being implied from the beginning to the end of the gospel covenant. And this, by God's help, they all may do, if they make it their serious business, and lay out their utmost care and pains upon it. For when a man's conscience tells him, that the thing is sinful which he is about to act, or at least he could readily see it, if he would direct his eye thereto; he need not go on therewith unless he will, but if he please, may instantly turn away from it. This, I say, he may do; for if he will not be wanting to himself, God will not be wanting to him therein, but enable him effectually to abstain from the same, when he truly endeavours so to do.

And since by God's grace they *may* perform this amendment if they will, and *ought* to perform it, if ever they hope he should accept them; let them but be careful so to do, and then this hindrance will give them no more trouble, but be quite removed. They will have no cause to be slow to promise, what they will be thus honestly careful to perform.

2. *Tho' afterwards, they should forget themselves, and break this promise in some instance;*

stance; yet is not their case desperate thereupon, but they have still the benefit of repentance for that breach of promise afterwards.

Indeed, if they break it as soon as ever they have made it, and run constant changes in sinning and repenting, performing it this time, and transgressing it the next; that repentance, it is to be feared, will be of no avail with God, because it resteth only in fair words and promises, or, at best, in some faint attempts, without any real reformation and amendment. But if, after they have promised to leave their sins, they go on for some due time to make good their word, and avoid the offence in several opportunities which lead them to repeat the same; but at last they happen to forget themselves, and break it in some instance; yet doth not that make void their former repentance, or render their case desperate thereupon; but they have still the benefit of repentance afterwards, for that breach both of duty and promise; and, by amending what they have done amiss, may be restored and made whole again. For God will pardon us upon our true repentance
2 and

and amendment, not only once, or a second time, but as often as there is occasion. So that if after we have promised in the holy sacrament, that we will never more be guilty of any particular sin, we yet happen to yield to it at length, and are anew overcome; let us but truly repent of that breach, and fully resolve against it a second time, and *amend* the same as we have opportunity, and then we are made whole as we were in our former station.

As for this hindrance then, whereby some are kept back from the holy sacrament, namely, Their promising therein concerning every sin, that they will no more commit it, which promise they dare not make, because they are afraid they shall not keep it;—it need not stick with them, nor ought to hinder any man, who pretends to religion. For let them promise the amendment, and keep it, and then the doubt is answered. Or, if after they have kept it for some time, they happen to fail upon some occasion; let them repent of that breach, and make new promises and faithful resolutions, and *perform* accordingly, and then they are restored. And all this has

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nothing

nothing in it that can be avoided, or ought to be feared, but is all necessary and desirable to be done: For it is their duty thus to promise, and their duty to perform, and their great privilege, that if they fail in any instance afterwards, yet still upon repeating their repentance, and amending what they have done amiss, they shall receive a pardon. It is what every man must do, not only to be a worthy communicant, but to be a christian.

AND THUS I have done with all those pleas I proposed to speak of at this time, by which men are wont to excuse their not coming to the holy communion. And upon the whole matter it appears, that communicating being in it self a great duty, and of great benefit, none of all those pleas can excuse our neglect thereof. For neither the seeming presumption in joining in this sacred feast, nor the customary absence of many good people from it, nor the admittance of unworthy receivers to it, nor the fear of breaking that promise of new life which is made therein; neither these, I say, nor any other impediment, whereby men are apt to
excuse

128 *Excuses for absenting from, &c.*

excuse it to their own minds, can really justify and bear them out, in absenting themselves from the Lord's table, when they are invited to it. So that every man, as he tenders our blessed Lord's command, and his own soul's everlasting interest, must be careful reverently and devoutly to partake in this holy feast, when he has an opportunity, and is called so to do.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

Plea of unworthiness to receive the sacrament.

[From KETTLEWELL on the Sacrament.]

MATT. XXII. 8.

Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

SINCE receiving of the holy sacrament, is a duty which our blessed Lord hath strictly enjoined, and from which we may all hope to receive very great benefits; it may well be expected, that all who would do service, either to their Saviour, or to themselves, should readily join therein, whensoever an opportunity is offered for the same. And so, it is like, all who pretend to serious religion would, were it not that they have some exceptions in their own minds against it, which till they are removed, make all discourses of the duty, or usefulness of this holy feast, to fall without effect, and which do persuade them, that however

necessary or advisable it may be to others, yet it is not so to them, who have so just an hindrance to excuse or discourage them from being present at it.

The most usual, and most general hindrance of all others, and which keeps back very many from the blessed sacrament, who otherwise are desirous enough to partake in the same, is, *their thinking themselves unworthy of it, and unfit to receive it; and the great danger of receiving it unworthily; inasmuch as the apostle says, they eat and drink damnation to themselves.*

Now to silence this plea, and to satisfy the minds of those who make it, so as that there may be no more cause for it, I shall observe these things following :

FIRST of all; *They shew great partiality in this plea; because they are not so scrupulous about neglecting the communion, as about the unworthy receiving of it, though there be the same cause to scruple both.* They shew all their niceness about *doing* what God bids them, but none about *letting it alone.* They are afraid of offending, in coming to the holy sacrament; but have no fear of giving

giving offence in staying away from it: as if God had forbid them only to receive unworthily, but had no where forbid them to absent themselves, and not receive at all.

But this is a very wrong judgment; for almighty God doth as strictly injoin a worthy, as he forbids an unworthy communicating. He hath given us his command for it, and that too, with such notes and circumstances, as shew that he lays a particular weight upon it, and highly expecteth to be obeyed therein. So that if we would not bring guilt upon our selves by sinning against him, we must make conscience of not coming to the sacrament, as well as of irreverent treating and profanation of it when we come.

This then is very partial and unfair dealing; to be scrupulous only about the manner of performing this duty; but to have no scruple at all about the omission of it; as if, when God commands us to do a thing, not to do it at all, were not as much a fault as to do it wrong; and it were not equally transgressed, when we neglect, as when we profane it. And if all those, who are full of fear about unworthy receiving, would be but as fearful of sinful abstaining;

abstaining; this equal fear on both sides would make them diligent in seeking satisfaction, and in carrying on the work of preparation; so that they might neither offend by coming, nor by staying away, but worthily approach to the Lord's table, and be heartily welcome to it when they do.

SECONDLY; I observe this further: *Every penitent, who is resolved to leave his sins, and has begun the change, is really worthy; so that the thoughts of unworthiness ought not to put him by it.*

He is a true penitent, who considers of all God's laws, and is resolved by God's grace to keep them; and of all his own sins, and is resolved by God's grace to leave them; and so, changing his former evil course and practice, becomes a new man. And whosoever does this, he is a fit person, and worthy to come to the holy communion. For all the particulars of worthy receiving, are instances of duty, and necessary parts of a good life; so that every man, who turns penitent, and becomes truly and acceptably good, will be indowed with all of them. Nay, if any man were to *learn* them, there would be no difficulty

difficulty therein at all, if *repentance* would but go down with him: So that any person who sincerely repents, may do every thing else which God requires him to shew forth in the sacrament. The great things expected of us at this feast, are these; namely, that we give *thanks* for Christ's death, and *resign* our selves up to his service, and *repent* of all our sins, and be in *love* and charity with all persons, and have *faith* in Christ and his merits.

And all these are easy, and create no great difficulty to a penitent person. For is it not an easy thing for him to *thank* Christ, who verily believes that he died for him? And cannot he readily *resign* himself up to his use, who has already given himself up to an holy life, which is all the use that he would make of him? And is not he in *peace and charity* with all men, who has repented of all his sins, and then surely of malice and unpeaceableness among them? And doth not he *believe* those things which our Saviour Christ has declared to him; namely, that he died for us to purchase terms of grace; and that now, for his sake, God will forgive us any sins, when we truly repent of them, and help us by his spirit to any graces, when

we carefully endeavour after them, and give us eternal life in heaven when we entirely obey him ; but that otherwise than upon these terms, he will not give us any of them ;—which are those declarations that he makes to us in the holy scriptures, and wherein he expects to be trusted and believed by us :—Doth not every penitent man, I say, *believe* all this, who is at the pains to live according to it ; and repents, that he may be pardoned ; and endeavours, that he may be assisted ; and obeys, that he may be graciously rewarded for it ?

All this faith, which is required to the communion, is necessary to *repentance*, and is shewn therein ; for we should not leave intemperance, fraud, malice, or any other sin that is strongly recommended to us, unless we believed God had forbid it, and would now for Christ's sake freely forgive, and eternally reward those who repent of it. And all this thankfulness, and resignation, and peace, and charity towards all men, which are likewise required to the same, are not only easy after it, but are parts of it. For if we are unthankful for Christ's benefits, or unresigned to his use, or out of charity
with

with any person ; we have not yet repented of all our sins, but, as to these at least, are still impenitent. So that where once repentance of all our sins is, there is, or may be in us, every thing else which God requires at this feast, to fit us worthily to partake thereof.

Thus is every true penitent fit to eat at the table of his Lord, and to be a worthy communicant. And therefore when any persons do from their hearts repent them of all their sins, and are fully purposed to lead new lives thenceforwards ; let them not be afraid to come to the holy sacrament, for they are truly such as God accounts worthy of it. If they have not parted with their sins indeed, but live still in them, and are ready to repeat them on the next occasion ; they will come unworthily whilst they are in that state, and will not receive the benefits intended to them thereby. But if they have broken loose from their sins, and have been acted by the fear of God, and led new lives for some time ; and are still putting out more endeavours, and praying for more grace to do this yet more perfectly ; They are the persons whom God calls to

this feast, and may justly expect to receive an hearty welcome at it.

Nay, if their return to God has been so late, as that they have not yet had time sufficient for well doing, but only for holy purposing that they will do well as often as they shall have occasion : Yet, if out of a serious conviction of the detestableness of every sinful course, they are fully resolved to leave it ; and after a due consideration of every part of their duty, they are fully, and without all reserve resolved to practise it ; there is no doubt but that this will and purpose, before the time and opportunities for practice come, will render them welcome guests, and worthy to communicate.

If any persons then have already left their sins, and do not willingly allow themselves in any of them ; if they have been striving long against them, and are daily gaining ground, and making a more perfect conquest thereof : Nay, if they, who since their return to God, have not had time to perform all this, are yet fully and deliberately purposed, and without all reserve resolved within themselves so to do ;—They are the persons, whom God invites to this feast ; they are *worthy* to come to it, and will be sure to

meet with a kind and hearty entertainment there. God and they are fully agreed in their own thoughts, and the terms of reconciliation betwixt them are consented to on both sides. For he proclaims mercy upon repentance, and they thankfully accept it; he offers to return into favour with every sinner that will amend his faults, and they are glad of the joyful news, and fully resolve an end to such their faults. And since they are both agreed upon the thing, what should hinder them from coming to the holy sacrament, which he has appointed for this very end, that therein they may give their express consent to this agreement, and mutually make this declaration?

Thus is every man, who has left his sins, and begun to lead a new life; or who is fully purposed in his own mind, and absolutely intendeth so to do;—a welcome guest at this feast, and worthy to communicate: So that no apprehensions of unworthiness ought to put him by it.

And as for those, who neither have left all their sins, nor are determined in their own hearts, and wholly bent to leave them; they are plainly *impenitent*, and thereupon most unworthy to communicate. But then,

THIRDLY, *That impenitence which unfits them for the holy sacrament, is no excuse at all for the neglect of it.*

Impenitence will excuse a man in no act, but is itself a very great aggravation of the same. It is no extenuating plea, but a damning fault; so that no man must ever hope to escape the easier, after he has omitted any duty, by giving that as the reason for it. When God calls us to the sacrament, to promise him that we will amend our faults, and lead new lives thenceforward; if we return answer, that we come not, because we are impenitent; that is as much as to say, we come not as he bids, because we will not; which is certainly a very odd kind of plea for any offence, and can never render his case better, but much the worse, that uses it.

As for those then, who keep away because they are impenitent; they are left without all plea, and have no excuse at all to make, for their not coming to the holy sacrament. The only thing that can stand them in stead, either as to it, or to any thing else, is their repentance and amendment; which they will not delay, if they

consider in how great need they stand thereof. For,

FOURTHLY; *Impenitent persons, who are unworthy of the holy sacrament, if they understand the danger and misery of their state, can by no means continue therein, but must forthwith repent and amend, and then this hindrance is gone, and they may worthily approach to it.*

If they understand the danger and misery of their state, I say, they cannot continue in it.—For so long as they remain impenitent in many, or in any one known sin, they are not only unfit to receive the sacrament, but also to say their prayers, to give thanks, or to have any thing to do with God in any other part of religious worship and service. They are shut out from all benefits of religion, they have no salvation by Christ, nor any hopes of heaven. If they happen to die suddenly whilst they are in this state, or are called away before the work of reformation is finished, they will go to hell, there to be tormented with the insupportable anguish of a wounded conscience, and unsatisfied appetites, and a raging fire, and
with

with all the terrors and disconsolation of darkness, and the utmost malice of devils and damned spirits, and the highest shame and confusion of face. All which they must undergo, without any eye to pity, or friend to comfort them, or any one to refresh them, or any abatement or intermission, for evermore. And this is a state of such horror and astonishment, as no man who looks upon it, can abide in : It is a condition of such extreme danger, as no one in his wits can willingly endure. So that if any of those, who are impenitent, will but be at the pains to lay to heart, and consider of the sadness of their state ; they can by no means persist therein, but will run with haste to repent, and instantly set about the amendment of their ways, that so they may be delivered from it.

And as soon as ever they do so, this hindrance is gone, and they are worthy to come to the holy communion. For that which fits us for it, is not an high pitch and perfection in saving virtues, or any extacy and transport in devotion ; but such true repentance and change of life, either in deed, or at least in will and purpose, as maketh us acceptable and honest christians.

So

So that whatever we were before, whilst we continued impenitently wicked; we are meet partakers of this holy feast, when we have repented of all our wicked ways, and are fully resolved to become obedient; and need not scrupulously to draw back, but may come to it gladly when we are called, and expect a friendly welcome from our blessed Lord and Saviour, when we meet him there.

AND THUS have I considered this great and most common plea, whereby so many are kept back from the holy sacrament, namely, their thinking themselves unworthy of it, and unfit to receive it; and have shewn plainly, that no ill man can be excused, and that no good man ought to be hindered thereby. And the result of it is this; If any person says, that he cannot come to this holy feast, because he is unworthy to join therein; he ought to consider withal, That he should not only be afraid of unworthy coming to it, but also of unworthy abstaining from it; and that unless he is impenitent, and still unresolved to leave all his sins, he is worthy to come to it; and that if such impenitence is the cause of his not coming, it is no excuse for the same;
and

and that he must consider of the danger and misery of that state, and so repent and get out of it; and when once that is done, he will be worthy, since every true penitent is welcome thereto. If he is truly penitent, he is worthy; and if he has not repented yet, he must instantly repent, that he may be worthy: And then let him not hold off from this heavenly banquet, but chearfully approach to it as often as he is invited.

And as to the *danger* of unworthy receiving, which the apostle speaks of, when he says, *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*, this hath nothing to do with any receivers of these days; and the *damnation* he speaks of is only *temporal* damage and loss, such as sickness, diseases, and death, occasioned by their eating and drinking to great excess, which also is the *unworthiness* in receiving which he there speaks of.

But supposing him to speak of *eternal* damnation, and that the *unworthiness* he speaks of is not the eating and drinking to excess, but coming to the sacrament in an impenitent state; yet the meaning thereof will not be, that such person shall
be

be inevitably damned for it, but that he commits a damning sin, which will prove deadly to him unless he repent thereof: And this is true, not only of unworthy eating and drinking, but also of sinful abstaining; so that as to that point they are equal.

And that the meaning cannot be, that he shall be inevitably damned for it, is plain from this, because God, for Christ's sake, hath promised, to forgive us all our sins upon our true repentance, and therefore this of unworthy receiving amongst the rest.

But only, *that he commits a damning sin*, which will prove deadly to him, unless he repents of it. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*; that is,—Unless his repentance, that gospel remedy for all sin, prevent it, he shall be liable to be punished, not only for an abuse in meat and drink, but for violating and profaning the body and blood of Christ, in approaching thereunto in a state of impenitence.

And this is true, not only of unworthy eating and drinking, but also of sinful abstaining from the holy sacrament. For to abstain therefrom our Lord also hath expressly

preſſly forbidden, and that in ſuch ſort as ſhews, that he laid a very great weight upon it; ſo that we moſt highly offend him therein, and cannot expect to regain his favour, till we repent and amend the ſame: and therefore, as I ſaid, as to that point they are both equal. We ſhall be condemned, without amendment, for unworthily eating, and ſo we ſhall too, for ſinful abſtaining. And therefore if the fear of damnation be of force with us, it ſhould equally draw both ways, and neither ſuffer us to neglect this feaſt, nor to come to it unworthily.

AND THUS have I done with this great plea, which is ſo apt to draw perſons from the communion. And upon the whole matter it appears, that it can be no juſt excuſe for mens neglect of the bleſſed ſacrament. No ill man can be excuſed thereby, and no good man need or ought to be hindred by it. So that every man, as he tenders our bleſſed Lord's command, and his own ſoul's everlaſting intereſt, ought to be careful, reverently and devoutly to partake in this holy feaſt, when he hath an opportunity, and is called ſo to do.

SER-

S E R M O N IX.

What worthiness for the sacrament
is requisite.

[From KETTLEWELL on the Sacrament.]

LUKE XIII. 26, 27.

*Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten
and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast
taught in our streets :*

*But he shall say, I tell you I know you not
whence you are ; depart from me, all ye
workers of iniquity.*

IT is not the doing of a thing, but doing
it in a fit and proper manner, that will
render our services acceptable in the sight
of God. And this is in no instance more
exemplified, than in the receiving of the
sacrament of the Lord's supper. Many do
receive it, and yet perhaps find not that
benefit which they expected from it : they
are not advanced thereby in their spiritual
concerns, but are still strangers to the love
of God in their souls, and alienated from

the ways of the kingdom of God. All which, together with the true cause and reason thereof, is intimated to us in the words of my text, *Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets: But he shall say, I tell you I know ye not whence you are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.*

Therefore it highly concerns us, not barely to do these things, but to take care in what manner they be done. *If I incline unto wickedness in my heart*, says the psalmist, *the Lord will not hear me.* And the apostle tells us, *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily*, not only receiveth no benefit thereby, but he becometh *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

I shall therefore make it my business at this time to shew, what dispositions and qualities do become us, when we approach to the Lord's table. In the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we commemorate the sufferings and death of our blessed Saviour, and the benefits conferred upon us thereby; we confirm the new covenant with God, of pardon and remission of sins, upon our repentance and amendment of life; and we
renew

renew the covenant of love and friendship with our brethren and all our fellow christians. And all these religious ends should be answered, with a religious temper, and a devout carriage and deportment: and then they are treated by us as they ought to be, and as their worth requires; and so we may expect to receive the benefits intended to us thereby.

Thus doth a worthy receiving of the holy sacrament, consist in answering its sacred ends, with sacred and suitable carriage and dispositions. And therefore, that we may see what behaviour is worthy of it, it is fit that we run over those several ends, and inquire what tempers every one of them requires of us.

And these ends are chiefly three:

I. To *remember Christ* our blessed Lord and Saviour, and particularly his dying for us; and this calls for love, joy, gratitude, obedient resolutions, and such like tempers.

II. To *confirm the new covenant* with almighty God of pardon and forgiveness upon our repentance and amendment; and this is not worthily done by us, unless we come to it in sincerity and faithfulness, and with

full purpose and performance of that repentance and obedience, which we therein profess and make promise of.

III. To *confirm a league of love and friendship*, with all our brethren and fellow christians; and this requires, that we lay aside all envy, hatred, and malicious thoughts, and come to it in peace and forgiveness of all those who have any ways offended us.

If we believe all these things which Christ our great prophet hath revealed to us, and our faith shews itself in these tempers, and carries us on to these performances; then we are worthy communicants, and have those qualities which will render us welcome guests at the Lord's table, and acceptable to him at all other times.

I. I say, One end of our eating bread and drinking wine at the Lord's supper, is, *To remember Christ*, not only as our prophet and teacher, but as our blessed Lord, Saviour, and benefactor; and above all his benefits, particularly to remember his *dying* for us. And this, to do it worthily, calls for

for love, joy, gratitude, resolutions of obedience, and other such like tempers.

The remembrance of any thing absent, and long since past, brings it back into our minds, and gives a sort of presence to it. And therefore when things are brought to remembrance, they should work upon us, and affect us, as if they were before us. When we remember our Saviour Christ then, at this holy feast, we must bear the same mind towards him, as we should do if we saw him, and were conversing with him; and that will consist in these things which follow.—We must honour him, and resolve to obey him, as he is our Lord and master; and love him, and delight in him, and give thanks to him, as he is our friend and benefactor; and be humbled under the sense of our unworthiness, and abhor our sins, as they brought him to bleed and to die for us; and resign up our selves, both souls and bodies, to his use, as we are bought with his blood, and are thereby become his own purchase.

More particularly;

ONE temper of mind which the commemoration of the death of Christ in the holy

sacrament doth require and call for, is, *an humble and deep sense of our own unworthiness*. His death was not for any thing that he had done, but only for our sins; and this shews what vile wretches we are, and how unworthy persons. It lets us see, how hateful our sins had made us unto God, and what they had deserved at his hands. For he would not let them pass, without inflicting the highest shame, and the most exquisite pain and tortures. Yea, when his own only begotten Son would intercede for them, and bear the burden of them in his own person, so implacable was the hatred which he had to them, and so indispensable were the reasons which constrained him to punish them; that his most tender love for *him*, whom he valued as himself, could not hinder, but that he should bleed and die for them. It lets us see also, how troublesome they have made us to our best friends, and how shamefully burdensome and expensive to our blessed Lord and Saviour. For when he longed and laboured to redeem us from them, he could not be *our* friend, unless he would cease to be *his own*; nor do us any good at all,

all, except he would give his own life a ransom for us.

And what man now can ever think of this, but he must hide his face, and be quite buried in a shameful sense of his own unworthiness. He may see how vile he was, when God was so highly offended with him, and thought no punishment too heavy for him, and would not be reconciled at the intercession of his own son, unless he would die instead of him ; and when it was so dangerous and costly a thing, for his Saviour to shew himself a serviceable friend to him, even no less than laying down his own life for him.

And if this sight doth not work shame and self abasement in him, he will be concluded by all, to be the basest man alive ; and utterly unworthy, that ever any thing, of all this unparallel'd kindness, should have been done for him.

ANOTHER temper and disposition of mind, which the remembrance of the death of Christ in the holy sacrament doth call for from us, is, *an utter abhorrence of our sins*, which were the causes of his sufferings. For if we do not hate and abhor

them, when we consider what tortures he endured for them, we shew that we are very little concerned for his ease, nor have any feeling of his pains, nor any zeal at all against the occasion of his sorrows. And this is a very bad requital of his undergoing all those pains for our sakes, and a most unworthy usage. So that if we would worthily commemorate his dying for us, we must be humbled and ashamed of our selves, at the sense of our own unworthiness, seeing we had deserved such insupportable punishments, and have put him to such exquisite and intense pains; and particularly we must turn our abhorrence on our sins, which caused all this mischief, and made him, in order that he might befriend us, to undergo such heavy tortures himself.

Again; ANOTHER temper of mind which becomes us, when we commemorate the death of Christ in the holy sacrament, is, *a resignation of our selves, both souls and bodies, to his use*, as we are bought with his blood, and thereby become his own purchase.

He

He died in our stead, and his blood was given to God for a ransom, to buy us off from death, that we might not die also. *The Son of man, saith he, is come, to give his life a ransom for many.* And since he bought us, and paid so dear for us, to deliver us from hell torments and eternal death, which is not *his*, but *our own* advantage; in all equity and reason, he is become intitled to our obedience, and we should be wholly devoted to his service. And this the scripture requires of us: *The love of God constraineth us*, says St. Paul, *to live in him; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them.* And again; *Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* And since his dying for us hath made us his own propriety, and he has thereby acquired an absolute right over us for his own use, which we had infinite reason to desire, but he had no need of; if we would remember it worthily, we must do it justly,
by

by honestly devoting our souls and bodies,
and assigning them over to be wholly at
his service.

AND these are the things, which must render our remembrance worthy of him, when in the holy sacrament we commemorate his dying for us, and shedding of his most precious blood a ransom for our sins. We must be humbled with the sense of our own unworthiness ; and abhor our sins, which brought him to these sufferings ; and resign up our selves, both bodies and souls, to be wholly at his use, and employed where, and in what he pleases, as thereby they are become his own purchase.

II. A Second end of our eating bread and drinking wine, in the Lord's supper, is, *to confirm the new covenant* with almighty God, of reconciliation and pardon, which Christ purchased for us by his death. And to do this worthily, we must come to it in sincerity and faithfulness, and with full purpose and performance of that repentance and obedience, which therein

therein we solemnly profess and make promise of.

We must come to it, I say, in *sincerity and faithfulness*. The great qualification, which is requisite in all compacts, is faithfulness. For they are the great means of security among men, and the great thing, which they have to depend upon, in their expectations from each other. And therefore it is both pretended, and expected, by all who make them, that they will not prove false and deceitful in them. Every man who covenants, expects of those whom he contracts withal, that they should mean what they profess, and perform what they promise; and maketh shew also himself, that he will do so likewise. And if he doth not, he is a very dishonest unworthy man, such as the gospel condemns, and will sentence for the same in the end (unless he repent thereof) to eternal destruction; *Covenant breakers* being ranked by the apostle among those, who in the judgment of God are worthy of eternal death.

And this sincerity or faithfulness consisteth in this; that we come with full purpose and performance, of that repentance
and

and obedience, which we profess, and make promise of. In this covenant, to all us believers, God offers at present a right to pardon, his holy spirit, and eternal happiness; and we again profess, and humbly make offer unto him, of our repentance and obedience. And this right he promiseth, still to continue to us, upon the same terms; and answerably, we promise to perform them, upon that expectation, for ever afterwards. And both in these professions, and promises, we must deal sincerely with him; and neither pretend a present offer of them, when we want them; nor make promises of them for the time to come, when we have no fixed design, and well-weighed resolution to perform them.

When we come therefore to renew the covenant, which we entered into at our baptism, and to confirm the same with almighty God in the holy sacrament, giving him both the profession and the promise of these duties, and receiving from him the proffer and the promise of these graces,—we must be hearty and unfeigned with him. Our souls must really be actuated by that
repent-

repentance which we profess, and fully intend to make good that obedience which we promise. And if we perform in both these, we are faithful and sincere in this business; but if we fail in either, we are dissemblers and hypocrites, who act a part, and go about to impose upon almighty God, which is a very unworthy part of us.

And this sincerity God expressly calls for at this feast, and requires us to be faithful with him, when we come to confirm the new covenant by partaking of it. *Christ our passover*, saith St. Paul, *is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness*, by adhering still to our former wicked ways, which therefore we are to repent of,—*but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

And as for *repentance* particularly, which is the great condition of the covenant that is renewed in it, it is the great qualification of all worthy receivers, and is most indispensibly required in this holy sacrament. It is the chief thing which is looked at in every confirmation of the covenant, and therefore is so peremptorily required when

we are *baptized*. It is the only thing that can recommend a sacrifice; and therefore is the main point, which must fit us for this feast *upon* a sacrifice.

As this eating and drinking therefore is a confirmation of the new covenant of pardon and reconciliation, upon our repentance and amendment; it requires that we should be faithful and sincere in doing of the same. And then we come worthily, and partake of it as we ought, when we truly repent of all our sins, according as we profess, and amend the same, according as we promise; and fully purpose, and endeavour at all times after, so to do.

III. A Third end, as I said, of our eating bread and drinking wine in the Lord's supper, is, *to confirm a league of love and friendship with all christians*. And this requires, that we lay aside all envy, hatred, and malicious thoughts; and come to it in peace and forgiveness of all who have any ways offended us.

We must not come to it in envy, hatred, and malicious thoughts; for that would be to give the lye to our selves, and to contradict

contradict our own professions. For when we come there, to partake of that one bread, we profess our selves to be all one body, and that we are all the body of Christ, and members one of another. We solemnly declare that we will be friends from that day forwards with all persons, and fully reconciled even to our bitter enemies, and to those who have given us the highest provocations; though not for their own sakes, yet for the sake of our blessed Saviour, who hath born a thousand times more from us, and deserves infinitely beyond what this comes to at our hands. We promise mutually, that we will lay aside all little animosities, and not fall out into quarrels and contentions, nor bear ill will, or be vexatious among our selves, nor seek our own pleasure, honour or advantage, at our brethrens loss: But that we will all have a compassionate sense of each other's infirmities, and a tender concern and diligent care for each other's welfare; that we will live as members of the same body, which all feel what befalls any, and are all pleased with the same joys, and all languish in the same sorrows, and all unite in the same ends, and all bear the
weak-

weaknesses, and supply the needs, and seek the good and pleasures of each other, as they do their own. All this good will, and brotherly kindness, peace and forgiveness towards all persons, we profess in eating together at this feast; and therefore it is most unworthy dealing if we want them, and are even then acted by hatred, envy, and malicious thoughts, which are most opposite and contrary to them.

And these are the things, which must render our eating and drinking, as it is in confirmation of a league of love and friendship with all our brethren, worthy of that signification. We must lay aside all envy and malicious thoughts, and come to it in forgiveness of all those who have offended us, and in charity to all our neighbours, and to all mankind.

AND thus we see, wherein the worthiness of eating and drinking in this holy feast doth consist, and what tempers and dispositions in us, are worthy of all those ends which are signified and designed by it. We must eat and drink in remembrance of Christ's dying for us, with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, and an utter abhorrence

horrence of all our sins, which were the causes of all his sufferings; and with an entire resignation of our selves, both souls and bodies, to his use, to be employed as his own purchase in what he pleases, as his death was a sacrifice for our sins, wherewith he bought and redeemed us.—We must eat and drink in confirmation of the new covenant of pardon and reconciliation, upon our repentance and reformation, professing our consent to the terms thereof, and our resolution to stand by it, in all sincerity and faithfulness; coming to it with that true repentance of all our sins, and with those obedient hearts, which we profess; and with a full purpose of making all that good afterwards which we promised in the same.—And lastly, We must eat and drink in confirmation of a league of love and friendship with all our brethren, laying aside all envy and malice towards them, and making restitution where we have wronged them, and forgiving them heartily where we have any grudge against them, and so being in perfect peace and charity with all men.

And this will make us worthy communicants at this feast, and welcome to God at all other times.

S E R M O N X.

Deportment at and after receiving
the sacrament.

[From KETTLEWELL on the Sacrament.]

I C O R. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

THE holy sacrament is a rite of the greatest honour and endearment, that ever God vouchsafed to men; and the most sublime and blissful instance of our communion with him. For therein he calls us to his own table, not to attend as servants, but to feast with him as his friends: And *that*, not for his own good, but intirely for our benefit; forasmuch as thereby he conveys to us grace and pardon and reconciliation, and all other benefits of our redemption. And being thus fit to excite in us the highest devotion, and to enrich us with the greatest fulness of grace and blessing,

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sing, one would expect it should be had in reverence, and most thankfully received by every christian.

And that we may do so at this time, I shall lay down in this present discourse some few things which may assist us in a right discharge of this duty.

When we come to the holy sacrament, to commemorate the death of our blessed Lord and Saviour, whose body there is represented as broken, and his most precious blood as shed, upon our account; we ought to shew forth an affectionate and hearty *thankfulness* for so invaluable a kindness,—an universal peace and *charity* to all mankind;—an intire *resignation* of our selves to his use and service,—and true *repentance* of all our sins, fully purposing to amend them thence-forward; all which we should excite in our own souls by due considerations.

More particularly; In the first Place, when we come to the holy sacrament, we ought to shew forth an *affectionate and hearty thankfulness*, for so *invaluable a kindness*. And what soul can be slow to pay this, who considers how infinitely

our blessed Lord hath deserved of us? For he hath procured for us the most precious and glorious things, which heaven it self could furnish, namely, that all our sins should be freely pardoned, and that the Holy Ghost, that immense, eternal, and all-sufficient spirit, should come in at all times to our help, and that we should be in no less quality than that of the sons of God, and heirs of a kingdom, who are assured of eternal joys and glories in another world.

And ought not gifts so vast, and so exceeding excellent, to be most affectionately acknowledged? He hath purchased all these to bestow upon us, at the dearest rate; not only taking the most unwearied pains, but also paying the highest price, and laying down his own most precious blood for the purchase.

And must not such astonishing kindness, which was affrighted by no hazards, nor stopped at any difficulties, nor declined any sufferings, not the suffering of death it self, for our sakes,—be always held in a most thankful remembrance?

And in all this, he had no ends of his own to serve of us, but was led on purely by the

pleasure which he takes in our happiness. He was not won by our *deserts*; for alas, we were his professed enemies, who had nothing to shew but highest provocations. He was not wearied out with the importunity of our *intreaties*; for it came,—*as* undeserved, *so* altogether unasked, whatsoever he did for us. He was not moved by the mediation of *friends*; for whom, alas, had we to intercede for us?

And shall not such amazing love and goodness, so freely shewed, without any respect to self ends or private interests, without intreaties or deserts, nay, in spite of all discouragements and highest provocations, be entertained with the greatest joy, and grateful acclamations?

He hath been an infinitely endearing and intire friend to us, without any inducement but his own most generous kindness; and against all discouragements; and beyond all bounds; and under the most frightful hazards; and at the highest expences, giving his own soul even to death, for a ransom to redeem ours.

And whensoever we hear or think of this, surely it will not be difficult for any of us to embrace him with hearts full of love and

holy desires, and to pay him most entire thanks, and burst out into songs of praise, and find it a most joyful business so to do.

2. When we come to the holy sacrament, *we must shew our selves reconciled to all those who have any ways offended us, and that we are in peace and charity with all persons.*

And this we shall not think much to do, if we consider how highly our blessed Lord is concerned for them, and how earnestly he sues in their behalf; for then we shall be readily brought to it on *his* account, tho' we might be more averse to it on their own. He has loved them so well, as to shed his precious blood for them; and can *we* find in our hearts to hurt any person, when we see him giving his own life to save him? He owns them as his friends and brethren; and is not that enough to make us kind, to see that he is so near akin to them? He hath made them members of his body, and thereby parts of his own self; and can we study revenge against them, when *he* comes in at last to bear the stroke, and give up his life in so doing? He becomes a petitioner
to

to us in their behalf, and intreats us by virtue of all that he hath done for us, to be friends again; and can we have the face to deny him, who hath so infinitely obliged us, and ought to command us in every thing? Shall we refuse so small a suit to him, who died for us; or stick to throw away a sinful resentment for his sake, who has parted with his own heart's blood for ours? Tho' they are most unworthy to be pardoned, yet he is most worthy to have their pardon; so that when he intreats for it, we must not be backward to grant it.

Nay, we stand daily in a thousand times more need of *his* pardon, than they do of *ours*; so that we block up the way to *our own* forgiveness, if we refuse at his suit to forgive *them*. For what if they have injured us? Have *we* been altogether innocent, and have offered him no injuries? What if they have most ungratefully abused us, after they had received the most endearing kindneses at our hands? Have we been duly thankful unto him, and never offended against all his mercies? Do we not owe him, as the scripture expresseth it, *ten thousand talents*; whereas their debt to us, is

but a trifle of *an hundred pence*? And since we are daily asking *him* the forgiveness of these vast sums; can we at the same time stick, at his instance, to remit these smaller matters to our neighbours? Have we the face to *ask* pardon, whilst we have not the heart to *grant* it? Or can we hope that Christ should give it to us, for the most heinous sins, at our request; when we deny it to our brother, for the smallest trespasses, at his? Or rather, since he most freely forgives us, and that too, without upbraiding us; shall not both our own necessity, and the example of his mercy, engage *us* to forgive our offending neighbours also?

3. When we come to the holy sacrament, *we must also resign our selves up to our Saviour's use, that he may dispose of us as he pleases.*

And what man can stick at this, who considers that he has bought us, and would put us to no use, but what is infinitely for our own advantage? Has any person a better claim to us, than he who bought us with his blood, and gave his own life for the purchase? Should not he have the benefit

nefit of all our service, who hath paid so dear for it, by dying himself in our stead? But if we were at liberty, and he had no power over us ; is there any better way to dispose of our selves, or could we desire to be in other hands rather than in his? Can we hope for more wisdom in any one to direct, or for more power to bring our happiness about, than in him who knows and governs all things? Durst we trust more to the faithfulness and affection of any heart, than of that which died for us! Or can we think our selves happier in any hands, than in his, who is in all things studious of our advantage?

For our blessed Lord seeks no other ends by us, but our own eternal happiness; he imposeth no duties upon our consciences, but what he has done himself before us, nay, what, had we the understanding to discern it, we should all have imposed upon our selves. So that in committing our selves to his conduct, we do not give, but seek a benefit, and dispose of our selves in that way, which is incomparably our highest interest. We are absolutely his own right, and it is infinitely our own interest to be wholly

wholly given up to him, and governed according to his liking; and therefore every considerate man will freely resign up his heart to Christ, and never suffer the world, or his own sins, to pull it back again.

4. At the same time that we thus resign up our selves to our Saviour's use, *we must heartily repent of all our sins, faithfully promising never more to yield to them, but to amend them all for the time to come.*—To repent particularly of all our sins, we must first *discover* them, by taking a distinct survey of the duties which our religion requires of us, and examining our own hearts at every one, whether we have consented to transgress them. And where we find we have done so, there we must bemoan our selves, and fully resolve, that if God will be pleased to pardon what is past, we will never yield to do the like again.

And what man will not thus stedfastly resolve to leave all his sins, who has the patience to consider, what will be the end of his continuance in them? For by that, we shall infinitely offend our most blessed Lord and Saviour, who gave his own life for ours, and

and whom therefore we are bound to please above all persons; we shall certainly lose all the joys of heaven, and eternal happiness, a loss which the whole world put together cannot recompence; we shall unavoidably be doomed to hell-fire and eternal torments, which is the utmost height of misery that can possibly befall us. This will infallibly be the effect of our perseverance, and allowance of our selves, in any sins which we find our selves guilty of.

And now let us ask our own souls, Whether we love them so well, that we will endure all this, rather than forego them? Shall we prize our sin to that degree, as for its sake to act despite to our blessed Lord, who died for us? Must it be dearer to us than his love, that we should dishonour and offend him whensoever it bids us? Is this the return which we make, to our dearest and best friend, namely, to side with his professed enemy? Is this our thankfulness for all his kindness, to stick to a sin, which aims at nothing but our destruction, rather than to him who gave his own life to save ours? Perhaps we love the sin dearly: but can we value it at such a rate, as to part
with

with everlasting life for it? Had we rather have it, than enjoy the face of God, and be for ever happy? Are we content, for the short and unsatisfying pleasures which it affords, to lose all the joys and glories of a blessed eternity? Will we *die* sooner than be divorced from it? and accompany it even into the flames of hell, and the midst of eternal torment?

God forbid, will every man say, whose heart is thus particularly examined thereupon, that ever he should be so desperately mad, and unaccountably wicked. When he considers this, he cannot do despite to so dear a Lord, nor throw away the eternal joys of the heavenly state, nor endure the most exquisite smart of hell, and the insupportable load of everlasting torment. No man can bear it, and it must amaze him to think of it.

And therefore since this will be the effect of our wicked ways, and of our allowed continuance therein, we ought to resolve from this moment to renounce them, and by the help of God never return to them any more.

Thus, let the drunkard think with himself on his cups, the swearer on his oaths
and

and perjury, the unjust man on his unlawful gain, the contentious on his quarrels, the unclean person on his forbidden pleasures, the revengeful man on his spiteful carriage, the slanderer and evil speaker on his reproachful words, backbitings, and defamations, and every other sinner on his particular sins. And when they seriously consider, that this Saviour must be lost, this happiness of heaven forfeited, and this eternal anguish and extremity of pain endured, if they allow themselves still to go on, and persist in them; they will instantly resolve to forsake them, and never yield to be guilty of them again.

And thus therefore we may discharge the duties of this feast, by exciting and actuating in our own minds, that *thankfulness*, and *charity*, and *resignation*, and *repentance*, which are to render us fit and worthy of the same.

BUT, nevertheless, when all this is done, and this solemn feast is concluded, we must not think for all that, that the work of worthy receiving is entirely at an end. For one thing still remains, which must employ us after-

afterwards ; and that is, a careful performance of all those promises which we made to God in this holy ordinance.

In the blessed sacrament, we seek not only a pardon for what is past, but also resolve and promise amendment for the future. And these promises must be made good afterwards, and it must be our care, whilst we live, to fulfil them.

This we are highly concerned to do, and it will greatly increase our guilt and condemnation if we fall short of it. For if we return to our former sins again, after we have thus solemnly vowed to forsake them, we are false to our word, and treacherous where we seem to be most sincere, and seek more especially to be trusted. We break our faith with God, and go about to delude his expectation, had he been capable to be imposed upon, and believed as we would have had him : which is as great an abuse as we can well put upon him.

Thus highly are we concerned, to perform the promises which we made at the table of our Lord.

And this we shall be very like to do, if we think often of them every day, for some time

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time especially, after we are gone from it. Indeed, if we forget all we did, and all the vows which we made there to almighty God; we are like to be the same men still, and must not expect that it should amend us. For the sacrament doth not better us without our own care, but by helping and engaging us to good endeavours after it is over. It works not as a *natural*, but as a *moral* means; and improves none, but such as remember what they did thereat, and labour after their own improvements.

So that if we think all our work was done at church, and fall into a careless and secure state of mind, when we get home again; we shall be held still in the same sins, and the matter is not like to be much mended with us by such receiving.

But if afterwards we frequently remember what we promised there; if we set our own vows every day before our eyes, and call to mind our own engagements; that remembrance will give them force, and make them have their effect upon us. For the thought of our having promised, and solemnly undertaken for any duties, is the readiest way to have them all performed.

To reap that benefit then which God designed, and which we expect by it, we must dwell much in our thoughts upon what passed there, after the feast is ended. We must maintain that acquaintance with our blessed Lord, which then began; and look upon it, not as a transient act, but as an entrance on a lasting state, which ever after we are to continue in. We must bethink ourselves daily, that the resolutions and promises which we are required to make at the holy sacrament, must be religiously performed by us, during the remainder of our lives.

This course will render it an ordinance full of grace and heavenly benefits, which will set us on mightily in our virtuous attainments. And when we reap this profit by it, it will cure all our indifferency and aversion to it, and make us run to it the next time with earnestness and desire, as we would to a most delicious and enlivening entertainment. We shall no more account it a fruitless work, when once we have tasted these sweet and wholesome effects of it; but desire to share in it oftner, as it can be had, and bless the time that ever we came thereto.

S E R M O N XI.

To exceed the righteousness of the
scribes and pharisees.

[From H O R N E C K's Discourses upon the Sermon on
the Mount.]

M A T T. V. 20.

*Except your righteousness shall exceed the
righteousness of the scribes and pharisees,
ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom
of heaven.*

TH E scribes and pharisees were
held in great estimation among
the Jews, and were looked upon as persons
of the most exemplary life and conversa-
tion; nevertheless, our Saviour here posi-
tively assures us, that except our righteous-
ness shall exceed theirs, we shall in no
case enter into the kingdom of heaven. It
concerns us therefore to inquire into this
matter, in order to find, if we can, wherein
their righteousness was defective; and con-
sequently may learn how to make ours ex-

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ceed

ceed theirs ; lest for want thereof, we incur the heavy sentence here pronounced.

To which purpose, I shall

I. Consider, who these *scribes* and *pharisees* were.

II. What such was their righteousness.

III. How ours ought to exceed theirs.

And,

IV. The danger if it do not.

I. I am to consider, who these scribes and pharisees were.

The *scribes* were an order or degree of men that applied themselves to the studying of Moses's law ; and so took upon them to write out, and to read the scriptures of the old testament, publickly, in the temple, and in the synagogues ; and to interpret and expound them to the people ; to resolve all dubious questions about the law, and to answer objections made against it ; and to preserve the genealogies of every tribe, especially of the royal family. Thus *Shaphan* the scribe is said to have read the law to king *Josiah*, in the twenty-second chapter of the second book of *Kings*. And

Ezra,

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Ezra, in the book that bears his name, is said to be *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*.

In the new testament, they are mentioned in places without number. They were the persons, together with the chief priests, whom *Herod* consulted, to know where Christ should be born. They were the persons who told the people, that Elias must first come before the Messiah. They sat, together with the pharisees, in Moses's seat, and taught the people. And it was by them, that Moses was preached in every city, and read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Hence they, being very conversant in the scriptures, were still had in great esteem by the people, and particularly by the pharisees, with whom they commonly joined in their opinions and practices. And that they might not only preserve, but increase this esteem they had got, they were so cunning and subtle, as still to be finding out new notions to please the people with.

For which end, they were forced to lay aside the plain literal meaning of the scriptures, as a thing much below them to mind; and to invent spiritual and mystical

senses for every place of scripture : Which at length swelled to that number, that by reason of their new and figurative interpretations, the word of God was so corrupted, and the true meaning of it so miserably perverted, that our Saviour himself tells them, they had *made the word of God of none effect by their tradition*. — These were the *scribes*.

To exhibit a proper notion of the *Pharisees*, it is to be observed, that at the time when our Saviour Christ appeared in the world, there were three famous sects among the Jews : the *Pharisees*, the *Sadducees*, and the *Essenes*. The *Pharisees* are very frequently mentioned in the New Testament, the *Sadducees* but seldom, and the *Essenes* never.

The *Pharisees* were an order of men, who distinguished themselves from the vulgar, by certain austerities and mortifications, and a seemingly stricter way of living. Yet they lived and conversed in cities and towns ; and were so far from avoiding, that they seemed to affect places where there was a great concourse of people. When they began, or who was the first founder of them,

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is uncertain. But it is probable, the institution of the *Nazarites* of old, who we read of in the sixth chapter of the book of *Numbers*; and the order of the *Rechabites* afterward, whom we meet with in the thirty fifth chapter of *Jeremiah*; or the strictness of the *Hafideans*, of whom mention is made by the Jewish writers of those times; I say, it is probable, that the institution of these, or some of these societies, might give occasion to this peculiar way of living; tho' the Pharisees afterwards degenerated from those sober patterns; and at last abused the pious and well meant self-denials of those that went before them, into superstition.

The *Essenes* were a kind of hermits, who chose to dwell in the country, as far from crouds as they could. And though they had stewards of their own in cities and populous places, to receive and entertain those of their sect, whose occasions led them to pass that way, yet their chief abode was in a wilderness, not far from Jericho; from whence, as they increased in number, they dispersed themselves, and planted colonies in other places. These were a modester and soberer sort of people, and studied self-

denial too, but to better and greater purposes than the pharisees ; and that is possibly the reason, why our Lord passeth no censure upon them ; because their service for the most part was reasonable ; and in their morals, they came very near to the christian institution : And it is likely, that most of them turned christians afterwards, being so well qualified and prepared already for that excellent discipline.

The *Sadducees* were sensualists, and Epicureans, and denied the being of another world. They pretended indeed to keep close to the letter of the law of Moses, and rejected tradition, and derided the pharisees, who were great admirers of it ; but they were at the same time loose and profligate, debauched and cruel, which is a temper agreeable enough to their main principle, namely, that men die like beasts, and that there is no resurrection of the dead.

The word pharisee signifies a separatist. And they were so called, because they separated themselves from other people, by an affected piety, which passed for great strictness in those days, and gave occasion to St. Paul to say, that before his conversion, he lived *after the strictest way* of the Jewish

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religion, that is to say, he lived a pharisee. — These were the *scribes* and *pharisees*. — The

Illd thing I proposed was to shew, *what such was their righteousness.* — Many instances thereof are recited in holy scripture. They gave alms : They prayed, and prayed very long : They fasted ; and when they fasted, disfigured their faces, and looked dismally : They praised God, and gave him thanks for his mercies : They were no scandalous offenders, extortioners, unjust, adulterers : They were ready to resolve cases of conscience : They taught the doctrine, and maintained the law of Moses : They garnished, adorned, and beautified the sepulchres of the ancient prophets, and kept them in repair with great veneration : They had a great regard for the traditions of their church : They were very punctual in paying tithes : They were often purifying and washing themselves, not only their hands and feet, but their whole bodies ; especially, when they came from the market place, or other places of public resort ; being fearful lest some uncleanness should stick to them, which they might have contracted by con-

versing in public: They took great pains to make proselytes and converts to their religion; for they compassed sea and land to do it: They were so strict, or so nice rather, that they were afraid of touching a person, who was counted an open and scandalous sinner; would not only not eat with him, but not so much as touch him; which was the reason why the pharisee, in whose house Christ dined, found fault with our Saviour, for suffering himself to be touched by a woman, who had been a notorious sinner.—Besides their tithes, they separated their first-fruits, and the thirtieth and fiftieth part of their incomes to pious uses. And as to all vows and sacrifices, no persons were more punctual to pay or discharge them, than they were.

This was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And now, most of this looks well. And one would wonder at first sight, how our Lord could find fault with these performances. One would suppose, that instead of blaming, he should have commended them for so doing. And how many thousands are there in the world, that do not half so much in matters of religion?
and

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and are so far from dreaming of going beyond all this, that they would look upon themselves as extraordinary faints, if they should only come up to what the scribes and pharisees did. And yet our Lord tells us, that unless our righteousness exceed theirs, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It concerns us therefore to inquire further into this particular, and to see if we can, wherein their righteousness was defective: For some great defect in it there certainly was, or else our Lord would never have passed this heavy doom upon us, if ours should not exceed it. And, in short, when we come to consider it, we shall find that their righteousness was exceedingly defective in several particulars. As,

First of all; They laid the stress of their devotion upon the bare *outward* task and performance, without any regard to the *inward* frame of their hearts. To have their minds seasoned at the same time with a due sense of God's greatness, or their own imperfections, was the farthest thing from their imagination. They thought God would be pleased with the slaying of a bullock,

lock, a lamb, or an he-goat; and they measured their prayers, not so much by the great sense they had of the divine presence, as by the length and number of them; not considering all the while, that the thing which God chiefly required in their religious service, was an humble and contrite spirit.

In the next place, They were very zealous for the *ceremonial* part of religion, but very regardless of the *moral* and more substantial part of it. The omission of a ceremony affected them more, than the omission of a pious and sober conversation. And to this purpose our Saviour tells them, *Wo unto you, says he, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Ye pay tithe of mint, and cummin, and anise, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.*

Another defect in their religion was, that they were abominably *selfish* in all their religious undertakings; for they did all their works to be seen of men. This was the worm that did eat out the heart of their religion, that corrupted their alms, their

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their prayers, their fastings, their self-denials, their mortifications, and all that they did. Their principal design was, to advance and promote their own profit, interest, and credit; and to gain the applauses and admirations of men. Though they made long prayers, yet it seems it was, to devour widows houses. Their very doctrines were suited to their profit and interest. They taught the people, that there was greater holiness in the gold of the temple, than in the temple; and that there was greater sanctity in the gift upon the altar, than in the altar itself; thereby to induce the people, to bring gold, and gifts, into the temple; by which they received no small advantage.

Another defect was, that though they owned indeed, and professed, and taught the law of Moses, yet at the same time they preferred their own *traditions* before it. It was a common proverb among them, "That the words of the scribes were more worthy than the words of the law." And where it so happened, that the law of Moses and their tradition interfered with each other, they did not chuse to interpret
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their tradition according to the sense and meaning of the law, but interpreted the law according to their own tradition.

Finally, They were very severe and strict in keeping *some* commandments of God, but very careless and negligent as to *others*. They hated extortion; but were malicious to a prodigy: They would not be drunk; but were abominably proud: They were for giving alms to people of their own sect; but looked upon it as sinful to relieve a poor Samaritan: They were for strictness of life before others; but were loose and wicked in secret: They abhorred adultery; but were slaves to ambition and vain glory: They bound heavy burdens on other mens shoulders; but would not touch them with one of their own fingers: And while they pressed a severe observance of the sabbath, they forgot that they were not only to rest from bodily labour, but from sin also.

Having thus seen what defects there were in the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; the way is made easy to my

III^d particular, wherein I propose to shew, *in what respects our righteousness ought to exceed theirs.*

First,

First, It ought to exceed theirs in *sincerity*; it being that within, which we seem to be without. Christ is not against outward devotion; he hath no dislike of an outward profession; he hath never declared against decent external ceremonies: But the thing lies here; he requires that we should be devout and serious within, as well as without; and that we take care that what we do without, arise from a sense of God within. He requires, that we do not only pretend to religion, but practise it; not only talk, and dispute, and entertain ourselves with speculations and discourses of it, but live up to its holy rules and precepts.

Another thing in which our righteousness ought to exceed theirs, is, To have pure and holy *ends* and designs in our religious actions. Christ is so far from discouraging his followers from many of the self-denials and severities that the scribes and pharisees practised, that in many cases his doctrine presseth nothing more; insomuch that the greater our self-denials often are, the better christians we are. But the thing which he above all requires, is a right end and intention in all this. We ought, with the
scribes

scribes and pharisees, to fast and pray, and to continue fervent in prayer a long time; we ought, with them, to give alms, and to give very liberally; to deny ourselves in a thousand vanities which the world doats upon, and to mortify our bodies in a decent manner: But here again lies the case; we ought to take care all the while, that we have no secret hopes or designs, either of promoting hereby our worldly profit and interest, or of gaining the applause of our neighbours, or of making God amends for some sins which we are loth to part with.

Our righteousness ought also to exceed theirs in *humility*; not only in having a just sense of our errors and many infirmities, but also in having low and humble thoughts of our religious performances; acknowledging that it is by the grace of God we are what we are, and that by the influence of that grace, those performances are wrought; and confessing from the heart, when we have done all that we are commanded to do, that we are unprofitable servants, and have done no more than our duty.

Finally,

Finally, our righteousness ought to exceed theirs in *charity*, or a compassionate temper towards all sorts of distressed persons. The scribes and pharisees extended their charity to persons only of their own sect. I need not to observe, that charity consists in many other things besides giving of alms. For if almsgiving had been all the charity that was necessary to salvation, the scribes and pharisees had been considerable men. For they were free and liberal enough towards those of their own party. But charity is a larger and a nobler virtue. It extends its arms, not only to all sorts of objects, whether friends or foes, whether relations or strangers, but (as far as its ability reacheth, and opportunity offers it self) to all sorts of distressed. It doth not only feed and cloath, but admonish, and reprove, and instruct, and assist, and sometimes correct and punish. It embraceth enemies. It judgeth favourably of pious heathens, much more of pious christians, though differing from it in opinion. It condemns none, whom God hath not condemned. It worketh no evil to its neighbour; but is ready unto every good word and work.

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These are the particulars, in which our righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. I come now, in the

IVth and last place, to consider, *the danger we are in if it do not*; we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This, one would think, should rouse every one of us, to take this threatening into serious consideration. If we go no farther in our righteousness than these unhappy men did, by this rule of our judge we must inevitably be miserable.

If therefore any of us have hitherto laid the stress of our devotion upon the outward performance, and have been strangers to the inward frame of mind, which alone is in the sight of God of great price; if we have been zealous for small, inconsiderable things, in matters of religion, and have neglected the more substantial and weighty part of it; if we have been selfish in our acts of piety and righteousness, and have been devout for worldly ends more than from a sense of our duty; if we have been careful to observe some of the commandments

ments of the gospel, and made no conscience of others : All this fabrick must be pulled down, and we must begin upon a new foundation, by applying ourselves to a true gospel life and temper.

If we are to exceed these men in their righteousness, we must do more than they did. We must take care to be perfect in the duties I have just now mentioned, of sincerity, of acting for a right end, of humility, charity, and universal obedience. For these qualifications rectify what was amiss in the righteousness of these men, and set us in the right way, from which they erred.

Their righteousness was an external, mechanical kind of righteousness. It was not free, not natural. They took no care to reform their thoughts, desires, and affections. And it is to be feared, that this is the case of too many christians. Nay, thousands there are, who do not come up so much as to the negative virtues of the scribes and pharisees. They were no drunkards, no swearers, no extortioners, no whoremongers ; and yet how many, that profess themselves enlightened by the gospel

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of Christ, fall short in several of these respects? And if even those, who do not exceed the righteousness of these men, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; what then will become of all those, who are not so good as they?

Surely, it must be a deplorable condition, when men have flattered themselves all their life time, with hopes of entering into the kingdom of heaven; to find themselves at last shut out? Therefore, lest this should be the case of any of us, let us purify our hearts and minds, and take care that none of the leaven of the scribes and pharisees cleave unto us.

S E R M O N XII.

Hindrances of religion.

[From Dr. OWTRAM.]

2 C O R. iv. 18.

*We look not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen; for
the things which are seen are temporal, but
the things which are not seen are eternal.*

TH E S E words are spoken of our state as it ought to be, and not as what it really is. The truly religious man looketh forward unto the rewards and joys of another world, and in prospect thereof disregardeth the events of all temporal things here below. And we should all do so, were we not hindered by divers worldly occurrences and considerations; the removal of which shall be the subject of my present discourse.

ONE thing, and the first, which hinders our attending to the eternal concerns of the other world, is this; *That we are early ac-*

customed to live the contrary life of worldliness and sensuality. There and thence we begin to live; it is long before we arrive to any considerable use of our reason, and longer still before we attain to any measures of religion. We do at first judge of all things by the seeing of the eye, and the hearing of the ear, and by the notices of our bodily senses; and we are fallen so far down the hill before we are aware, that it is very hard ever to return back again.

All those things that feed and flatter our senses, they are of ready, easy precepts; we need take no pains to see what is pleasant, nor to taste that which is sweet, nor to hear that which is delightful: It costs us no labour at all, to be inclined to pride, and ease, and sensuality: It is not matter of difficulty to us, to love that which gives us pleasure, and to hate that which creates uneasiness to us. Whence it comes to pass, that we sink deep into the life of sensuality, very early in our youth, before we are well aware of our greatest duties and concerns; and being engaged by nature, and instituted by custom at first to live by sense,

we find it very difficult afterwards to live at any other rate.

We find it very disgustful to us, to deny our senses any thing they have been accustomed to enjoy. It is hard to starve an inordinate appetite; it is difficult to restrain an urgent desire; we cannot easily forego the acquaintance of our master-delights, nor frown upon the temptations that flatter us, and that have formerly ministered pleasure unto us: Hence it is that *Solomon* advises, that *a child should be trained up in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it*: And it is required, to *remember our creator in the days of our youth*; which differs not from the apostle's sense, where we are commanded *to flee youthful lusts*. Every man is naturally a stranger to spiritual things, for the *natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*. But much more are *they* estranged from these things, and with greatest difficulties are *they* brought to any sense or feeling, any taste and liking of them, who have long lived the life of worldliness and sensuality.

A SECOND reason why we attend so

little to the concerns of the other world, and why the *things which are not seen* have so little influence upon us, is this ; That in *this life we go beyond and besides the measures of God's promises* : And *that*, both in respect of the *things we desire*, and of the *time* we desire them in. In both which regards, we exceed the measures of God's promises, and consequently set our hearts beside the foundation which a truly religious man ought to proceed upon,

We exceed the measure of God's promises in the *things we desire*, not because God doth not promise that which is sufficient, but because we desire more than enough. God hath not promised wealth and honours, riches and abundance to every man : All men were not born to be great and powerful ; we cannot all descend from kings and princes ; we cannot all dwell in courts and palaces ; noble blood runs but in few channels : If there were no subjects, there would be no kings ; nor could there be masters, unless there were servants to make them such. The perfection of the world, the orderly administration of human affairs, do require that there be a great diversity amongst
men,

men. There must be rich and poor, high and low, great and small, rulers and subjects both together, and one as well as another; for perfect equality will bring on a state of disorder and confusion.

Now herein is the excess and error of mens desires; every man would be great, every man would be rich, honourable, and noble; every man would possess the greatest estate, the noblest honours, and the highest preferments. Men love to be in the world, like the *Pharisees* in synagogues, in the highest rooms. But this is a design which cannot be performed, because it is not promised; and seeing there is in this case no promise from God, there can be no reasonable expectation in man.

Now let every man judge impartially, whether this be not his own condition. Is it not his design to get a great estate? Of this he cannot have a religious expectation, for it is not promised unto him; food and raiment he may expect, and content also together with them, for thus far God hath promised to supply him, if he be not wanting to himself. But that he shall be as rich as his

neighbour, or as successful as his brother, or as well preferred as his friend, or as well esteemed as his enemy,—this is not necessary for him, nor perhaps good for others, nor promised by God, nor attainable by lawful means; and therefore in such a design he cannot be moved by a religious expectation.

It is to be feared that we are all of us much to blame in these things. We are apt to stretch our desires in earthly things further than God hath intended his promises. How few are there that can be content with that which is moderate, tho' that which is such be more sufficient than that which is too much. Behold the poor man who labours for his daily sustenance, he is as satisfied as the rich man who employs him; and yet neither of them perhaps fully satisfied. He would possess the place of that same rich man, and he the place of him that is above him; and were we but all one degree higher, we think we should do well enough; for we see content dwelling in the degree just above us; and yet behold when we are advanced to that degree, content is fled from thence, and we are even yet but where we were before.

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In the mean timé, while every man runs beyond the goal, and stretches himself beyond sufficiency, and overshoots the promises of God, and his own need, in the inordinancy of his desires; no wonder if he wavers, where God hath not established him; if he fluctuate in his hopes, where God hath not promised to gratify his desires; no wonder if he be full of uncertainties, doubts, fears, disquiets, without faith, without hope, without assurance, without comfort, where he is gone so far that he hath left God behind him, and desires a greater portion than God's infinite bounty thinks and knows to be sufficient for him.

And as men exceed the promises of God in the measure of the *things that they desire*, so likewise in the *time* that they desire them in. We are generally very forward and impatient, very greedy and importunate for our ends; we are not willing to stay God's time, for our portions and allotments in this world.

It is a great disease, and very common to be instantly weary of those burdens that God lays upon us. If we be a while sick, how impatiently do we long for health? If
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we be wronged and injured, how vehemently do we desire to be righted forthwith? If an enemy hath wounded our honour, stained and blemished our reputation by a false report; how earnestly do we long to meet, and to convince him? We know no rest, we are not at ease, we know not well how to eat, or drink, or sleep, till we meet the enemy, till we have retrieved our honour, and thrown back the aspersions from our selves upon him.

Thus it is in all our griefs. We are importunate in our demands; and will not stay till our relief comes. But now true religion, which looketh forward unto the things which are not seen, is not so impatient. Have we an infirm body? Let us wait God's time for health; and if it never comes on this side the grave, yet we know that hereafter our bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. Have we a broken fortune, or are we in distressed circumstances? Let us trust in God for the recovery of all things, but wait God's time; for true religion is always patient. Many a time hath the sun broke into an excellent lustre, after a cloudy gloom,

gloom, or a violent storm: Many a time hath God restored riches after poverty, and caused a flourishing estate to grow out of the ashes of a consumed fortune: Many a time hath he reclaimed the profligate, and snatched the firebrand out of the fire, and drawn the lamb out of the wolf's mouth, giving joy for heaviness, and a garment of praise for a spirit of mourning.

But then, God's own time must be waited for. We must not number minutes. We must not determine moments, we must not prescribe times and seasons unto God. We that cannot make the sun arise, must not set God a day. For if we be in haste, we do not act according to a true christian expectation; our haste will make our ends slow, and our forwardness will inflame our impatience, will rent our hopes, will cool the hand of God, which would otherwise work our desires. In the mean time, let us consider this: When we have been sick, and poor, and injured, and depressed, and afflicted long enough; then God will deliver, and not before: and because we expect deliverance before, therefore we do not act like christians.

A THIRD

A THIRD thing which hinders mens having an eye to the things which are not seen, and living according to a true religious expectation, is, *because they never apprehend themselves to have any need of so living.* Religion looks at its portion afar off; whereas they have all they stand in need of, under their hands; they have their portion in possession, youth, health, strength, riches, honours, preferments, all things they desire, or know to be desirable, behold they have them in view, nay they have them in possession; and so they do not stand in need of looking forward into futurity to make them happy, because they see and enjoy all the good things that they desire here at present.

Thus doth the rich man rejoice in his present fortune, and the charms of his own heart, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* Behold, he had a great stock and sufficiency of present comforts; he fed his eye with plenty of corn, and grasped his treasures in his hand; he had his treasures laid up in his barns, and had locked up his content in his own possession; and what need of living upon the prospect of futu-

futurity, when there was present enjoyment? what need of borrowing contents from the expectation of what was to come, when he had abundance of contents at present?—It is distress that drives us unto God: It is weakness, that makes us lay hold on strength; and sense of poverty that gives us the desire of being rich; according to that of the prophet, *In their afflictions they will seek me early.*

It is seldom that men seek the Lord, unless they need some good, or fear some evil. It is hunger makes us cry for bread, and nakedness makes us provide for cloathing, or danger forceth us unto God. Therefore saith the prophet, *Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till the wine inflame them. And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands.* When there was such plenty of wine and musick, and strong drink, where flourishing prosperity was watered with rivers of pleasure; then they were so far from regarding the words of God's mouth, that

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is, living by promise of better things to come, that they regarded not the work of his hands.

Charge them (says the apostle) *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.* It is an hard thing, it should seem, to have riches, and not to trust in them; to have wealth, and not to be high-minded: And therefore it often comes to pass, that they that have riches, and power, and content, and satisfaction enough, or think there may be enough of these without God, never look further than these things; for we never seek unto God, till necessity leads us unto him.

A FOURTH thing which hinders our attending to the eternal concerns of the other world, is this; namely, *Because the life of religion puts us upon continual exercise of mind,* and sets all our powers upon the stretch, and often carries much of contest and anxiety in it: And therefore seeing we are so much inclined to sloth and ease and carnal security, we are loth to live in so continual a labour,
and

and to give our selves the trouble of a continual watch or battle against the world.

The holy scripture in many places represents the christian life as a warfare, and therefore a state of strict and righteous discipline. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood* (says the apostle), *but against principalities, and powers; and therefore we must put on the whole armour of God.*

The exercise of the life of a christian sometimes makes us weary in the day, and watch in the night. It sometimes makes our sleep short, and the nights long; our dreams troublesome, and our waking painful. It makes a pale face, and a thin visage, and a thoughtful heart; not of it self, but by reason of the conflicts against our vices that it puts us upon; nor do those conflicts last long, but lead unto triumphs and victories, yea unto joys and pleasures.

In the mean time the vigorous exercise of religion causes deep thoughts, strong affections, vehement longings: it wakens every eye, it strengthens every nerve, it exercises every power, it tries every grace, it actuates all the vigours of the soul; and because this is a life of labour and strife, of pains
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and difficulties, tho' but for a time, therefore we are loth to live a truly religious life.

In the *last* place, we are hindred from attending to the eternal concerns of the other world,—by the guise and humour of *this* world.

And this is the reason why the apostle exhorts us, *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.*

Now there are three things wherein we are deceived by the guise of the world;

We see men labouring for *other* ends than the ends of religion :

We see them *succeed* sometimes in those labours :

And we see them *valued* for that success.

It is in the guise of the world a strange thing, to seek for any thing but worldly things. *Solomon's* design runs in most mens minds : *I made* (says he) *great works ; I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and orchards, I planted trees in them of all kinds, I made me pools of water, I got me servants and maidens, great possessions of great and small cattle ; I gathered me silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings : I got me*
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men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts; and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Thus did Solomon, thus doth every man's neighbour almost, in several measures and degrees. He seeks an estate, he studies riches, he catches at honours, he labours at the preferments of this world:—And this is one of the *first* things we observe in it.

Again, We see one or other of our neighbours by these means growing rich, and acquiring wealth; he builds houses, he buys land, he raises his family, he lives high, and maintains all in a splendid pomp.

And, lastly, We see him by secular cares and labours growing rich, and valued, esteemed, courted, and sued unto, because of those riches; and this presently inflames our spirits, this sets all on fire to be as rich, as noble, as great, as much esteemed as he is. And hence we begin to lay our plots and designs, and contrive the means of growing great, and rich, and popular; and these designs thus laid, they employ our heads, our hearts, our hands, in the getting of riches

and honours ; they lay God aside, they remove heaven out of our thoughts, they banish truth out of our mouths, they throw justice from our hearts, they cut off the sinews of faith, they extinguish every spark of love, they fill our minds with covetousness, and our tongues with guile, and teach our lips to utter lies ; they kindle a thirst in us after other mens goods ; they anoint our hands with the sweat of the poor ; they pave our way with frauds and deceits. In the mean time, notwithstanding all this, the world will admire a fool if he be rich ; or, however, he will bless and admire himself.—Whereas the life of true religion is on the contrary : The life of religion is a thing unseen, unknown, obscure, and nothing popular ; for *our life is hid with Christ in God*. Religion doth not shine and glitter in the world ; it doth not walk in silks, nor rattle in coaches, nor present it self to be admired and gazed on in the streets. It doth not prefer and advance, ennoble and elevate a man in this world ; no, nor doth it speak vehemently even in its religious services, nor is loud and clamorous in prayer, nor is it cried up for zeal and godliness : But it is a
silent,

silent, humble, hidden thing, that dwells at home, that prays in the closet, that sighs within its own breast, that lives hard and low, mean and obscure, teacheth a man how to eat bread, and drink water, and to give God thanks: And hence it comes to pass, that it is mean and ignoble, little and despised in the eye of the world.

THUS you have seen, how it comes to pass that we are estranged from the life of godliness:

1. We are engaged by our bodily senses early and betimes, in the morning of our lives.

2. We live beyond and besides the measure and degrees of God's promises.

3. We are not often sensible of the necessity of regarding future things, because we rejoice in the sufficiency of the present.

4. Religion engageth us in conflicts and difficulties, in strife and battle against our selves: And,

Lastly, We are imposed upon by the guise of the world, where we see men labouring with all their might for secular things, suc-

cessful oftentimes in that labour, and valued for that success.

THEREFORE, in the conclusion of the whole, let us take care, that worldly glory may not dazzle our eyes, that worldly ease may not charm our hearts, to a forgetfulness of God, of heaven, and of our selves; that we may not value *the things that are seen*; for *the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.*

S E R M O N XIII.

Of the Friendship of Christ.

[From Dr. SOUTH's second volume.]

JOHN XV. 15.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, have I made known unto you.

WE have here an account of *Christ's friendship* to his disciples; that is, we have the *best of things*, represented in the *greatest of examples*. In others we see the *excellency*, but in Christ the *divinity* of friendship. By our baptism and church communion we are made one *body* with Christ; but by this we become one *soul*.

Love is the greatest of human affections, and friendship is the noblest and most refined improvement of love; a quality of the largest compass. And it is here admirable to observe, the gradual ascent of the love,

which Christ did bear to his disciples. The amazing greatness of which will appear, from those several degrees of kindness that it hath manifested to man, in the several periods of his condition. As,

First, If we consider man *antecedently to his creation*; while he yet lay in a state of non-existence; and consequently could have nothing to recommend him to Christ's love, nor shew any thing lovely, but what he should afterwards receive from the goodness of an almighty Creator. Yet even then did the love of Christ begin to work, in purposing to create a being endowed with the perfections given to mankind.

Next, let us consider the love of Christ, as directing it self to man *actually created*, and brought into the world; and so, all those glorious endowments of human nature, in its original state and innocence, were so many demonstrations of the munificent goodness of *him*, by whom God first made, as well as afterwards redeemed the world. He was created with a noble and clear understanding, a rightly disposed will, and a train of affections regular, and obedient, and perfectly conformable to the dictates of right

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right reason. So that, upon the whole matter, he came forth, not only the work of God's hands, but also the copy of his perfections; for in the image of God made he man.

And, lastly, let us look upon man, not only as created, and brought into the world, with all these great advantages superadded to his being; but also, as *depraved*, and fallen from them; as an out-law, and a rebel, and one that could plead a title to nothing, but to the highest severities of a sin-revenging justice. Yet even in this estate also, the boundless love of Christ began to display it self, and to shew forth its effects towards a creature now become so wretched, being not only not amiable, but highly odious.

And herein we see the ascent and progress of Christ's love. For, if we consider man in such a loathsome and provoking condition, it was certainly love enough, that he was spared, and permitted to enjoy a being. But then, not only to continue his being, but to adorn it with privilege, and from the number of *subjects* to take him into the number of *servants*, this was yet a greater love.

But then farther, to advance him from a *servant* to a *friend*; this is an instance of favour, above the rate of a created goodness, an act for none but the son of God, who came to do every thing by miracle, to love supernaturally, and to pardon infinitely.

My text therefore declareth the engaging behaviour, and gracious condescension of Christ to his disciples, in owning them for his *friends*, who were more than sufficiently honoured by being his *servants*. Henceforth (says he) *I call you not SERVANTS; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: But I have called you FRIENDS; for all things that I have heard of my Father, have I made known unto you.*

The name of *servants* of old was esteemed to imply a certain meanness of mind, as well as lowness of condition; especially in those ages and places of the world, in which the condition of servants was extremely different from what it is now amongst us; they being generally *slaves*, and such as were bought and sold for money, and consequently reckoned but amongst the other goods and chattels

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chattels of their master. It was for this reason, that Christ thought fit, to wave the appellation of *servant* here, as, according to the common use of it among the Jews (and, at that time most nations besides), importing these three qualifications, which being directly contrary to the spirit of christianity, were by no means to be allowed in any of Christ's disciples.

The *first* whereof is that here mentioned in my text, namely, *an utter unacquaintance with his master's designs*; in these words, *the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth*. It was not usual to make their servants their counsellors; they were to know nothing but their masters commands; and in these also, not to know the reason of them.

And they were to be kept at a distance, not only from their masters counsels; but also for the most part from their *presence* likewise.

But the voice of Christ in his gospel is, *Come to me, all ye that are weary and are heavy laden*. The condition of a servant carries him off to a distance; but the gospel speaks nothing but allurement and invitation. The law concerning masters, bids
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the servant go, and he goeth; but the gospel says to every believer, come, and he cometh.

Secondly, The name of a servant in those times did import, a slavish and degenerate *awe* of mind; as it is in the epistle to the Romans, *God hath not given us the spirit of bondage again to FEAR.* He who serves, hath still the low and ignoble restraints of dread upon his spirit; which in business, and even in the midst of action, cramps and ties up his activity.

Thirdly, The appellation of *servant* did import, a *mercenary temper* and disposition; and did denote such a one, as made his reward both the sole motive and measure of his obedience: one, who neither loved the thing commanded, nor the person commanding it; but was wholly and only intent upon his own advantage.

These were reckoned generally to be the inseparable qualities of *servants* in those days; which, no doubt, were the cause, why our Saviour would not treat his disciples, whom he designed to be of a quite contrary disposition,—with this appellation.

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I PROCEED therefore now to shew, what is included, in that great character and privilege, which he was pleased to vouchsafe both to them, and to all believers, in calling and accounting them his friends.

And it includes in it these things following :

I. FREEDOM of access. House, and heart, and all are open for the reception of a friend. The entrance is not beset with solemn excuses, and lingring delays ; but the passage is easy, and free from all obstruction, and not only admits, but even invites the comer.

It is true, the vast distance, that sin had put between the offending creature, and the offended creator, required the help of some great umpire, and intercessor, to open him a new way of access to *God* ; and this, *Christ* did for us as mediator. But we read of no mediator to bring us to *Christ* ; for tho', being God by nature, he dwelleth in the height of majesty, and the inaccessible glories of the godhead ; yet to keep off all strangeness, between himself and the sons of men, he hath condescended to a relation and kindred with us, he hath cloathed himself

self with flesh and blood, that so he might bring down his glories to a partaking of human converse.

And therefore, he that denies himself an immediate access to Christ, affronts him in the great relation of a friend; thereby opening himself both to our persons, and to our wants, with the greatest tenderness, and the freest invitation. The

2D PRIVILEGE of friendship, is, *a favourable construction* of all passages between friends, that are not of so high a nature, or so evil an influence, as to dissolve that relation. *Love covereth a multitude of sins*, saith the apostle. When a scar cannot be taken away, the next kind office is to hide it. Love is never so blind, as when it is to spy faults. It is a noble, and a great thing, to cover the blemishes, and to excuse the failings of a friend; to draw a curtain before his stains, and to display his perfections; to bury his weaknesses in silence, but to proclaim his virtues upon the house top. It is an imitation of the charities of heaven; which, when man lies prostrate in the weakness of sleep and weariness, spreads

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spreads the covering of night and darkness over him, to conceal him in that condition: But as soon as our spirits are refreshed, and nature returns to its morning vigour, God then bids the sun to rise, and the day to shine upon us; both to advance and to shew that activity.

This is the demeanor of friendship between man and man. Let us next consider, how it is between Christ, and the soul that depends upon him. He is no way short, in these offices of tenderness and mitigation, but, on the contrary, is by infinite degrees superior. For where our heart doth but relent, his melteth; where our eye pities, his bowels yearn. How many frowardnesses of ours doth he look over, how many indignities doth he pass by, and how many affronts doth he put up at our hands; because his love is invincible, and his friendship unchangeable. He weigheth every action, every sinful infirmity, with the allowances of mercy; and never weigheth the sin, but together with it, he weighs the force of the inducement.

Should we try *men*, at that rate that we try Christ; we should quickly find, that the

largest stock of human friendship would be soon exhausted. But *his* compassion follows us with an infinite supply. He is *God* in his *friendship*, as well as in his *nature*; and therefore we sinful creatures are not taken upon advantages, nor consumed in our provocations. The

3D PRIVILEGE of friendship, is, *a sympathy in joy and grief*. It is an old, and a wise observation, That *sorrows by being communicated grow less, and joys by being communicated grow greater*. And friendship is the only scene, upon which the glorious truth of this great proposition, can be fully exemplified and drawn forth. Which indeed is a summary description of the sweets of friendship; and the whole life of a friend, in the several parts and instances of it, is only a more extensive comment upon, and a plainer explication of this great truth.

Thus it is in human friendships. Let us observe next, how Christ sustains and makes good, this generous quality of a friend. And this we shall find fully set forth to us, in those passages of holy scripture, where he is said to be *a merciful high priest, touched*

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with the feeling of our infirmities; and that in all our afflictions, he is afflicted.

He understands the exact measures of our strengths and weaknesses. He knoweth our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.

This, in short, is the privilege of the righteous, to have a companion and a supporter, in all the doubtful turnings, and doleful passages of their lives. This happiness doth Christ vouchsafe to all his followers; that as a *saviour* he once suffered for them, and as a *friend*, he always suffers with them. The

4TH PRIVILEGE of friendship, is that which is here specified in my text, *a communication of secrets.*—*All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*

To communicate a secret to any one, is to exalt him to one of the royalties of heaven. For none knoweth the secrets of a man's mind, but his God, his conscience, and his friend.

It was of old a privilege, with which God was pleased to honour such as served him

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at the rate of an extraordinary obedience, thus to admit them to a knowledge, of many of his great counsels, locked up from the rest of the world. When God had designed the destruction of Sodom, the scripture represents him, as unable to conceal that great purpose from *Abraham*, whom he always treated as his friend and acquaintance; that is, not only with love, but also with intimacy and familiarity. *And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I go about to do?* He thought it a violation of the rights of friendship, to reserve his design wholly to himself.

And with regard unto *Moses*, it is said of God, that *he spake unto him, as a man speaketh to his friend.*

And, in general, it is said by the psalmist, with respect unto all those that fear God, that *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*

And if God maintained such intimacies, with those whom he loved under the law, (which was a dispensation of greater distance;)—we may be sure, that under the gospel (the very nature of which imports condescension and compliance;)—there must needs

needs be the same, with much greater advantage.

And therefore when God had manifested himself in the flesh, how sacredly did he preserve this privilege? How freely did Christ unbosom himself to his disciples? *Unto you (says he) it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but unto others in parables: that seeing they might not see.* And again, he says, *Many prophets and righteous men, have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* The

5TH ADVANTAGE of friendship, is counsel and advice. In being single and alone, there is not only discomfort, but weakness also. And *that* saying of the wise man,—*Woe to him that is alone*, is verified upon none so much, as upon the friendless person.

When a man shall be perplexed with knots and difficulties in his affairs; where the determination is doubtful, and which way soever the choice determines, he is sure to venture a great concern;—how happy

then is it, to fetch-in aid from another person, whose judgment may be greater than our own, and whose concern for our interest is no less.

Now Christ is not failing in *this* office of a friend also. For in that illustrious prediction of Isaiah, amongst the rest of his great titles, he is called the *Mighty Counsellor*. And his counsel is not only sure, but also free. The only price that he sets upon his counsel is, that we follow it; and that we do that, which is best for us to do.

He is a light to those that sit in darkness. He is understanding to the ignorant, and eyes to the blind. And therefore every sincere christian may comfort himself in this high privilege, that in the great things which concern his eternal peace, he is not left to stand or fall, by the uncertain directions of his own judgment. Christ never leaves any of his followers perplexed, amazed, or bewildered, where the welfare of their souls requires a better judgment than their own, either to guide them in their duty, or to disentangle them from a temptation.

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6. THE last and crowning privilege or property of friendship, is *constancy*.—Not that we ought to suppose any constancy or continuance in friendship to be, or that it ought to be, such,—as no injuries, or provocations whatsoever can break off. But the true nature of constancy is this: It is such a stability and firmness of friendship, as overlooks and passes by, all those lesser failures of kindness and respect, which, partly thro' passion, partly thro' indiscretion, and such other frailties incident to human nature, a man may be sometimes guilty of,—and yet still retain the same habitual good will, and prevailing propensity of mind, to his friend, that he had before.

But how few tempers in the world, are of that magnanimous frame, as to reach the heights of so great a virtue. Many offer at the effects of friendship, but they do not last; they are promising in the beginning, but they fail and fall short in the prosecution. For most people in the world are affected by levity, and humour, and by strange and unreasonable changes.

But now, that we may pass from one contrary to another,—Christ, who is the

same yesterday, and to day, and for ever, in his *being*, is so also in his *affection*.

Friendship is a kind of *covenant*; and most covenants run upon mutual terms and conditions. And therefore so long as we are exact in fulfilling the condition on our parts, I mean, exact according to the measures of *sincerity*, tho' not of *perfection*, we may be sure that Christ will not fail in the least, to fulfil every thing on his part. The favour of men is uncertain and variable; and the friendship which they take up, upon the accounts of judgment and merit, they many times lay down out of humour. But the friendship of Christ hath none of these weaknesses. For neither principalities, nor powers, things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate from Christ the meanest of his friends; for whom he loveth, he loveth unto the end.

Now from the particulars hitherto discoursed of, we may infer and learn these two things :

1. *The excellency and value of friendship.*
Christ the son of the most high God, the second person in the glorious Trinity, took upon

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upon him our nature, that he might give a great instance and example of this virtue; and condescended to be a *man*, only that he might be a *friend*. Our creator, our lord and king, he was before; but he would needs come down from all this, and (in a sort) become our equal, that he might partake of that noble quality that is properly between equals. Christ took not upon him flesh and blood, that he might conquer and rule nations, lead armies, or possess palaces; but that he might have the relenting, the tenderness, and the compassions of human nature, which render it properly capable of friendship.

2. We learn from hence, *the high advantage of being truly pious and religious.* When we have said and done all, it is only the true christian, and the religious person, who is, or can be sure of a friend; sure of obtaining, and sure of keeping him.

But as for the friendship of the world; when a man shall have done all that he can to make one his friend, employed the utmost of his wit and labour, to create an endearment, between him and the person

whose friendship he desires ; he may, after all his endeavours, be miserably disappointed.

But now, on the contrary, he who will give up his name to Christ in faith unfeigned, and a sincere obedience to all his righteous laws, shall be sure to make him a friend for ever ; a friend, who will own him in his lowest condition, speak comfort to him in all his sorrows, counsel him in all his doubts, answer all his wants, and will never leave him nor forsake him.

But when all earthly friendships shall fail us, he will then take us under his protection, will embrace, and cherish, and support us ; and, as the psalmist expresseth it, he shall *guide us with his counsel here, and afterwards receive us into glory.*

S E R M O N XIV.

Chance directed by God.

[From Dr. South's first volume.]

PROV. XVI. 33.

The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord.

THESE words contain a declaration of the exactness and universal extent of the divine providence, in an instance which of all others it is the most unlikely to be concerned in; and that is, the casting of lots: the event of which is looked upon as intirely casual and accidental.

Some there are, who would have the word *chance* or *accident* quite discarded out of the world, as being of impious and profane signification. And indeed, if the word *chance* be taken by us, in that sense, in which it was used by the heathens, so as to make any thing casual in respect of God himself, their exception ought justly to be admitted.

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But to say a thing is a chance or casualty, as it relates to mankind, is not profaneness, but a great truth; as signifying no more, than that there are some events, beyond the knowledge, purpose, expectation, and power of men: And for this very reason, because they are so, it is the royal prerogative of God himself, to have all these loose, uneven, fickle uncertainties under his disposal.

The subject therefore, that from hence we are naturally carried to the consideration of, is the admirable extent of the divine providence, in managing the most contingent passages of human affairs: *The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal of it is of the Lord.*

Which that I may the better treat of, I shall consider the event of a lot, in these two respects:

I. As it is subject to God's *knowledge*.

II. As it is subject to his direction and *providence*.

I. Let us consider the event of a lot, as it is subject to God's *knowledge*.

The light of *man's* understanding is but a short, diminutive, contracted light, and
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looks not beyond the present. He knows nothing future, but as it hath some kind of presence, in the certain and constant manner of operation belonging to its cause; as we know, that summer will cause heat, and when it is winter there will be cold: but whether God will continue the world to the return of another season, we cannot know, by any certain argument, either from the nature of God, or of the world.

But when we look upon such things, as relate to their immediate causes, with a perfect indifference, so that in respect of them, they equally may or may not be; human reason can then, at the best, but conjecture what will be. And in some things, as here in the casting of lots, a man cannot, upon any ground of reason, bring the event of them so much as under conjecture.

The choice of man's will is indeed uncertain, because in many cases it is free; but yet there are certain habits and principles in the soul, that have some kind of sway upon it, apt to bias it more one way than another; so that upon the proposal of an agreeable object, it may reasonably be conjectured, that a man's choice will rather incline

incline him to accept, than to refuse it. But when lots are shuffled together, in a lap, urn, or pitcher; or a man blindfold casts a dye; he can have no reason in the world to presume, that he shall draw this lot rather than another, or throw such a dye rather than the contrary.

And these things being out of the compass of man's knowledge, they must also consequently be out of his power. For no man can govern that which he cannot possibly know: Since to dispose of a thing, implies both a knowledge of the thing to be disposed of, and of the end that it is to be disposed of to.

But now, God knows perfectly every event of the most casual things in the world. He, by reason of his eternal, infinite, and indivisible nature, is, by one single act of duration, present to all the successive portions of time, and consequently, to all things successively existing in them. Which eternal indivisible act of his existence, makes all future things actually present to him. And it is this presence of the object, which founds the unerring certainty of his knowledge.

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But I shall not insist upon these speculations, which, when they are most refined, serve only to shew, how impossible it is for us, to have a clear and explicit notion of that which is infinite. Let it suffice us in general, to acknowledge and adore the vast compass of God's understanding; that it is a light shining into every dark corner, ripping up all secrets, and stedfastly grasping the greatest and most slippery uncertainties.

Look upon things of the most accidental and changeable nature, accidental in their production, and changeable in their continuance; yet God's foreknowledge of them is as certain in him, as the memory of them is or can be in us. He knows which way the lot and the dye shall fall, as perfectly as if they were already cast. All futurities are naked before that all-seeing eye, the sight of which is not hindered by distance of place, or by length of time.

And this makes way for the

II^D THING I proposed to speak to; namely, that as all contingencies are comprehended by a certain divine *knowledge*, so they are governed by as certain and steady a *providence*.

There is no wandering out of the reach of God's providence; no slipping out of the hands of his almighty power. God's hand is as steady as his eye. And certainly, thus to reduce contingency to method, instability and chance itself to an unfailing rule and order, argues such a mind as is fit to rule and govern the world; and indeed, nothing less than such an one can govern it.

Providence never shoots at uncertainties: There is an arrow that flieth by night, as well as by day: And God is the person that directs the same, who can aim then as well as in the day time. Things are not left to hover under an indifference, whether they shall come to pass, or not come to pass; but the whole train of events is laid beforehand, and all proceed by the rule and limit of God's direction. For otherwise, he could not manage the affairs of the world, and govern the dependence of one event upon another; if that event happened at random, and was not cast into a certain method, and relation to some foregoing purpose to direct it.

The reason why men are so short and weak in governing, is, because most things
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fall out to them accidentally, and come not into any compliance with the schemes which they had laid; but they are forced to comply with chance and casualties, and to strike in with things as they fall out, by after-applications of them to their purposes, or by framing their purposes to them.

But now there is not the least thing that falls within the cognizance of man, but is directed by the counsel of God. *Not an hair can fall from our head, not a sparrow to the ground, without the will of our heavenly father:* Such an universal superintendency, hath the eye and hand of providence over all, even the most minute and inconsiderable things.

Nay, and sinful actions too, are overruled to a certain issue. Even that horrid villany of the crucifixion of our Saviour, was not a thing left to the disposal of chance and uncertainty: But St. Luke, in his history of the acts of the apostles, relates concerning him, that *he was delivered to the wicked hands of his murderers, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* For surely the son of God could not die by chance; nor the greatest thing that ever came

came to pass in nature, be left to an undeterminate event. It is not imaginable, that the great means of the world's redemption should rest only in the number of possibilities, and hang so loose in respect of its issue, as to leave the event in an equal poise, whether ever there should be such a thing or no.

Even the actions and proceedings of *wise men* run in a much greater closeness and coherence with one another, than thus to drive at a casual issue, brought under no forecast or design. The pilot must intend some port, before he steers his course; or otherwise he had as good leave his vessel to the direction of the winds, and the government of the waves.

Thus therefore, if we allow God to be the governor of the world, we cannot but grant, that he orders and disposes of all inferior events; and if we allow him to be a wise and rational governor, he cannot but direct them to a certain end.

Yea, he directs them oftentimes to very *great* ends. He that created something out of nothing, can as easily raise great things out of small; and bring all the scattered and
disordered

disordered passages of affairs, into a great, beautiful, and exact frame.

If we reflect upon the rise, continuance, and dissolution of *nations* and governments; it is strange and wonderful to consider, by what small and inconsiderable means they are oftentimes brought about; and those means wholly undesigned, by those who are the immediate actors in them.

As for example: Let us reflect upon that strange and unparalleled history of *Joseph* and his brethren; an history that seems to be made up of nothing else but chances, and little contingencies, all directed to mighty ends. For was it not a mere chance, that his father Jacob should send him to visit his brethren, just at that time that the Ishmaelites were to pass that way; and so his unnatural brethren take occasion to sell him to them, and they to carry him into Egypt? and then that he should be cast into prison, and thereby brought at length to the knowledge of Pharaoh, in that unlikely manner that he was? Yet by a joint connection of every one of these casual events, providence served itself in the preservation of a whole kingdom from famine. Likewise, by their sojourning

sojourning in Egypt, he made way for their bondage there; and their bondage made way for their deliverance.

Many passages happen in the world, much like that little cloud, in the eighteenth chapter of the first book of Kings, that appeared at first to Elijah's servant no bigger than a man's hand; but presently after, grew and spread, and blackened the face of the whole heaven, and then discharged itself in thunder, and rain, and a mighty tempest.—So these accidents, when they first happen, seem but small and despicable; but by degrees they branch out, and widen themselves, into such a numerous train of mischievous consequences, one drawing after it another, by a continued dependence and multiplication, that the plague becomes victorious and universal, and personal mis-carriage determines in a national calamity.

And as it is with *nations* and governments, so it is also with *particular persons*. Thus, for example again, Was it not a mere accident, that Pharaoh's daughter met with *Moses*? Yet it was a means to bring him up in the Egyptian court, then the school of arts and policy; and so to fit him, for that

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great and difficult employment that God designed him to. For see upon what little hinges that great affair turned: for had either the child been cast out, or Pharaoh's daughter come down to the river, but an hour sooner or later; or had that little vessel not been cast by the parents, or carried by the water into that very place where it was; in all likelihood the child must have undergone the common lot of the other Hebrew children, and been either starved or drowned; or however, not advanced to such a peculiar height and happiness of condition.

On the contrary, when providence designs judgment or destruction to a person, no body knows by what little, unusual, unregarded means, the fatal blow shall reach him.

Thus king *Abab* being designed for death, a soldier in the enemy's army drew a bow at a venture; yet the sure, unerring directions of providence, carried it in a direct course to his heart, and there lodged the revenge of heaven.

And this directing influence of God reacheth not only to the *great* and powerful, but it is also as visible and remarkable in the

affairs of persons of *inferior* rank and condition; and that too, in those things, in which they are most nearly concerned; as in their *lives*, their *health*, their *reputation*, their *friendships* or *enmities* in the world, and such like.

And first for men's *lives*: Tho' these are things for which nature knows no price nor ransom; yet we may appeal to universal experience, whether many mens lives have not oftentimes hung upon a very slender thread, and the distance between them and death hath been scarce perceptible, and the escape wonderful. There have been some, who upon a slight, and perhaps groundless occasion, have gone out of a ship, or house, and the ship hath sunk, or the house hath fallen, immediately after their departure.

In like manner, for mens *health*; it is no less wonderful to consider, to what strange casualties many sick persons oftentimes owe their recovery. Perhaps an unusual draught, or morsel, or some accidental violence of motion, hath removed that malady, which for many years hath baffled the skill of all physicians.

And then also, for mens *reputation*; there

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is hardly any thing, which (for the most part) falls under a greater chance. If a man succeeds in any attempt, tho' undertaken with never so much folly and rashness; his success shall vouch him for a politician, and good luck shall pass for deep contrivance: For give any one fortune, and he shall be thought a wise man. On the contrary, be a design never so artificially laid, and spun in the finest thread of policy; if it chanceth to be defeated by some cross accident, the man is then run down by an universal outcry; his counsels are derided, his prudence questioned, and his person despised.

And then again, for the *friendships* or *enmities*, that a man contracts in the world; than which there is nothing that hath a more direct and powerful influence upon the whole course of a man's life, whether as to happiness or misery; yet chance hath a ruling stroke in them all.

A man, by mere peradventure, lights into company, and there begins an acquaintance with a person; which acquaintance and endearment grows and continues, even when his relations fail him; and perhaps

proves the support of his mind, and of his fortune, to his dying day.

And the like holds in *enmities*, which come much more easily than friendships. A word unadvisedly spoken on the one side, or misunderstood on the other, any the least surmise of neglect, hath sometimes raised such an aversion to a man, as in time hath produced a perfect hatred; and that, so strong and tenacious, that it hath never left vexing and troubling him, till it hath hunted him to his grave.

AND now, tho' I have not recounted all, or indeed the hundredth part of those casualties of human life, that may display the full compass of divine providence; yet I think I have reckoned up so many, as will sufficiently inforce the necessity of our reliance upon it. I shall therefore only mention what uses we ought to make of this doctrine I have delivered, and so conclude. And these are briefly two; not to be *over-confident in prosperity*; and not to be too much *dejected in adversity*.

WE should from hence learn, I say, not to be *over-confident in prosperity*.

David, after his deliverances from Saul, and his victories over all his enemies round about him, confesseth, that this his prosperity had raised him to such a pitch of confidence, as to make him say, that *he should never be moved, God (of his favour) had made his hill so strong*; but presently he adds, almost in the very same breath, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

The sun shines in his full brightness, in the very moment before he passeth under a cloud. Who knows what a day, what an hour, nay, what a minute may bring forth? He who builds upon the present, builds upon the narrow compass of a point; and where the foundation is so narrow, the superstructure cannot be high and strong too.

Is a man confident of his present *health* and strength? Let him consider, that an unwholesome blast of air, a cold, a surfeit taken by chance, may shake in pieces his hardy fabrick, and (in spite of all his youth and vigour) send him, in the very flower of his years, pining and drooping, to his long home.

Or is a man confident of his *estate*, wealth, and power? Let him read of those strange,

unexpected dissolutions of the great monarchies and governments that once made such a noise, and looked so big in the eyes of mankind, as being founded upon the deepest counsels, and the strongest force; and yet, by some slight miscarriage, or cross accident, (which let in ruin and desolation upon them at first,) are now so utterly extinct, that nothing remains of them but a name: when he shall have well reflected upon this; let him see what security he can promise to himself, in his own little personal domestick concerns.

People forget how little it is that they know, and how much less it is that they can do, when they grow confident upon any present state of things.

There is no one enjoyment that a man pleaseth himself in, but is liable to be lost by ten thousand accidents, wholly out of all mortal power, either to foresee, or to prevent. Reason allows none to be confident, but him only who governs the world, who knows all things, and can do all things, and therefore can neither be surprized, nor overpowered.

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THE other use we should apply this doctrine to, is, not to be too much *dejected in adversity.*

As he who presumes, steps into the throne of God ; so he that despairs, limits an infinite power to his own finite apprehensions, and measures providence by his own little contracted model.

Of those many millions of casualties which we are not aware of, there is hardly one, but God can make an instrument of our deliverance. And therefore let no man, who owns the belief of a providence, grow desperate or forlorn, under any calamity or strait whatsoever ; but compose the anguish of his thoughts, and rest his amazed spirits, upon this one consideration, that he knows not which way the lot may fall, or what may happen to him ; he comprehends not those methods by which providence may dispose of him ; but he may be assured of this, that God will order all things to him for the best.

IN a word, and to sum up all the foregoing discourse : Since the interest of governments and nations, of princes and pri-

vate persons, and that both as to life and health, reputation and honour, friendships, enmities, and the like, (notwithstanding all the contrivance and power, that human nature can exert about them,) remain so wholly contingent, as to us; surely all the reason of mankind cannot suggest any solid ground of satisfaction, but in making that God our friend, who is the sole and absolute disposer of all these things; and in carrying a conscience so clear towards him, as may encourage us with confidence to cast our selves upon him; and in all casualties, still to promise our selves the best events from his providence, to whom nothing is casual; who constantly wills the truest happiness to those that trust in him, and works all things according to the counsel of that blessed will.

S E R M O N XV.

Folly of expecting concealment in fin.

[From Dr. S O U T H 's 4th Volume.]

N U M B E R S XXXII. 23.

—*Be sure your sin will find you out.*

O F all the ways to be taken, for the prevention of sin ; there is none so effectual, as to confute those notions and motives, by which men are induced to venture upon it. And amongst such motives, the heart of man seems chiefly to be prevailed upon by two; to wit, secrecy in committing sin, and impunity consequent thereupon.

In treating on which subject, I shall therefore

I. Shew, *What are those grounds and motives, upon which the sinner is apt to take up such a confidence, as to believe, that he may sin with concealment and impunity.* And,

II. I shall shew *the vanity and folly of such expectations.*

I. I propose to give *some account of those grounds and motives, upon which the sinner presumes that he may act with concealment and impunity.*

FIRST of all; men consider *the success which perhaps they have had already, in the commission of some sins.* And this proves an encouraging argument to them, to commit the same for the future; as naturally suggesting this to their thoughts, that what they have done so often, without either discovery or punishment, may be so done by them again. For nothing so much confirms a man in the continuance of any practice, as frequent experience of success in what he does; the proper genuine result of this, being confidence.

Some men indeed stumble in their very first entrance upon a sinful course; and this their disappointment frequently proves their cure; by making them to retreat and draw off timely, as being disheartened with so unfortunate a beginning.

And it is, no doubt, the singular mercy and indulgence of God to such, thus to cross and turn them out of the paths of destruction; which had they found smooth
and

and pleasant, would have infallibly engaged them therein to their lives end.

All disappointment in the beginnings of a vicious course, is a check to the sinner's confidence. And therefore, on the contrary, when God is pleased to leave a man under the full sway and power of any vice, and does not concern his providence to lay any impediment in his way, but suffers him to go on and succeed in his wickedness; this flushes him up, and makes him hard and insensible; and that makes him venturous and daring; and so locks him fast in the embraces of his sin, while he has not the least surmise of the sadness of the issue, and that the present sweets of sin will be bitterness in the end.

And having thus acquitted himself to his own mind, he is apt to flatter himself that God will acquit him too. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily* (says Solomon *), *therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* This is the secret reasoning of most sinners hearts; because God does not confound them in the very act of sin, by some immediate

* Eccl. viii. 11.

mediate judgment, therefore they resolve upon a more audacious progress in it.

ANOTHER ground upon which men are apt to persuade themselves, that they shall escape the stroke of divine justice for their sins, is, *their observation of the great and flourishing condition of some remarkable sinners in this world.* This makes them question, whether God will ever concern himself to revenge that hereafter, which he seems so much to connive at here: Especially, since men are so generally apt, to judge of things and persons, according to the present face and appearance of them, that they make the present, the sole measure of the future; guide their hopes and their fears by what they actually see and feel, and (in short) make their outward senses the rule and ground of the determination of their judgment.

Flourishing sinners are indeed plausible arguments to induce men to sin: But—however; for a sinner to spend, and to finish his days flourishing, is a privilege allowed by providence to very few; and those only such, who will hereafter be more grievously punished.

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ANOTHER fallacious ground of this security, is, the opinion which many men have, of their own *singular art and cunning*, to conceal their sins from the knowledge of the world. The eye of man, they know, is but of a weak sight, and a short reach; so that he neither sees in the dark, nor pierces into their retirements; and therefore they presume, that they can contrive the commission of their wickednesses, under such sure coverts of secrecy, as to elude the inspection of the most curious and exact inquirers.

FINALLY; The last and surest ground (as they think) of promising themselves security from the punishment of their sins, is a strong presumption, that they shall be able to *repent, and make their peace with God when they please*. And this, they fully reckon, will keep them safe, and effectually shut the door against their utmost fears, as being a reach beyond them all.

For let a man be never so deeply possessed, with a belief of God's sin-revenging justice; never so much persuaded, that all the wrath which the scriptures can threaten or inflict, is most certainly intailed, not upon sin only
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in general, but also upon his own sin in particular; nay, let damnation be always in his thoughts, and the torments of hell continually present in his apprehensions;—yet all this shall not be able to take him off from his resolution to sin, and his confidence of escape, because he has an argument in reserve, which he thinks will answer all, to wit, an after repentance. For if this shall interpose between the commission of sin, and the punishment of it, he concludes, upon the stock of all God's promises to the penitent, that he is past danger. And as he thus reckons, that repentance will secure him, so he doubts not but he can command that when he pleases. And so he imagines, he hath found out a way, to enjoy the pleasures and advantages of sin, without enduring any thing of the smart of it.

But now, how wretched an inference this is, for any man to form to himself, and thereby to mock and defy heaven; and yet how deep it lies in the hearts of most sinners, is most evident to be observed. For this is manifestly the strong hold, which the soul hath provided for itself to repair to, whenever it hath a mind to sin both with de-

light and with security. And were it not for this, it would be impossible for any considering man, to satisfy himself in his continuance in any known sin for one moment. For he could not, with any consistence with that mighty over-ruling principle of self preservation, commit a sin, if he assuredly knew or believed that he should be damned for it; which yet, since the infinitely just and true God has most peremptorily decreed and threatned, unless repentance intervenes, it is evident, that his whole refuge must be in the hopes and prospect of that, which, he persuades himself, shall in due time come in, between him and the fatal blow.—And this very consideration utterly evacuates the terrifying force of the divine threatning; and by promising the sinner a fair issue of things, both here and hereafter, makes the deluded creature conclude, that *his sin shall never find him out.*

AND thus having shewn some of those fallacious grounds, upon which men use to build their confidence of the concealment, or at least of the impunity of their sins; I proceed now, in the

II^d Place, to shew the *vanity and folly* of
such

such a procedure.—And this will appear on several accounts.

THE *very confidence it self of secrecy*, is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's discovery. For confidence, in such cases, causes a frequent repetition of the same action. And if a man does a thing frequently, it is odds, but some time or other he is discovered. For by this he subjects himself to so many more accidents ; every one of which may possibly betray him. Confidence makes a man venturous ; and venturousness casts him into the high road of danger, and the very arms of destruction.

THERE is sometimes also, a strange, providential concurrence, of *unusual, unlikely accidents* for the discovery of some sins, especially of a great and enormous nature. A villany committed perhaps but once in an age, comes sometimes to be found out also by such an accident, as scarce happens above once in an age. For there are some sins more immediately invading the great interests of society, government, and religion ; which providence sets it self in a more peculiar manner to detect, and bring to light, in spite of all the coverings which

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art and power can cast over them: Such as are murder, perjury, sacrilege, and the like. And more particularly for murder; it hath been often observed, in what a strange, stupendous manner providence oftentimes traces it out; tho' concealed with all the closeness, which guilt and skill could contrive.

Further: God sometimes *makes one sin the means of discovering another*: As for instance, how many have by their *drunkenness* disclosed their *thefts*, their *adulteries*, and *murders*, which might otherwise have been buried in perpetual silence? For the tongue is then got loose from its obedience to reason, and commanded at all adventures by the fumes of a distempered brain, and a roving imagination; and so, presently pours forth whatsoever they shall suggest to it, sometimes casting away life, fortune, and reputation, all at once.

And how does the confident sinner know, but the grace of God, which he hath so often affronted and abused, may some time or other desert, and give him up to the fordid temptations to this vice of drunkenness, which shall make the doors of his heart fly

open, and cause his own tongue to give evidence against him, for all the villanies which had laid so long heaped up, and concealed in his guilty breast? For let no man think, that he has the secrets of his own mind in his own power, while he has not himself so; as it is most certain that *he* has not, who is under the power of this frenzy.

And therefore, as it is a frequent, and indeed a very rational saying, That a liar ought to have a good memory; so, upon the like account, a person of great guilt, ought to be also a person of great sobriety.

AND sometimes, God lets loose the sinner's *conscience* upon him; filling it with such horror for sin, as renders it utterly unable to bear the burden it labours under, without publishing, or rather proclaiming it to the world.

None knows the force, the power, and the remorseless rage of conscience, when God commissions it to call the sinner to an account. How strangely it will sift and winnow all his retirements. How terribly it will wring and torture him, till it has bolted out the hidden guilt, which it was in search

search of. All which is so mighty an argument of the prerogative of God over men's hearts, that no malefactor can be accounted free, tho' in his own keeping; nor any one concealed, tho' never so much out of sight. For God still has his officer in the sinner's breast, who will be sure to attack him, when God gives the word.

And this shews the great importance and wisdom of that advice, That every man, when he is about to do a wicked action, should, above all things in the world, stand in awe of himself, and dread the witness within him; who sits there as a spy over all his actions, and will be sure, one day or other, to accuse him to himself; and perhaps compel him to accuse himself also to others. For this is no new thing, but an old experimented case; there having been several in the world, whose conscience has been so much too hard for them, that it has compelled them to disclose a villanous act, tho' they saw certain, and immediate death the reward of that confession.

But most commonly has conscience this dismal effect upon sinners, at their departure out of this world. At which time, some

feel themselves so horribly stung with the guilty sense of some frightful sin, that they cannot die with any tolerable peace, till they have revealed it; finding it some small relief (it seems), an easement of their load, to leave the knowledge of their sin behind them, tho' they carry the guilt of it along with them.

THESE are some of the chief ways, by which a man's *sin finds him out* in this world. —But what now, if none of all these should reach his case, but that he carries his crimes all his life closely, and ends that quietly: and perhaps, in the eye of the world, honourably too; and so has the good luck to have his shame buried in the grave with him?—Even yet, for all this, the man has not escaped; but his guilt still haunts, and follows him into the other world, where there can be no longer a concealment of it, but it must inevitably find him out; when the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened; when all the villanies that ever were committed, shall be displayed and published before men and angels.

What fruit then can we now have, of those things, whereof we shall be then ashamed?

shamed? What advantage can the sinner promise to himself from any sin, that can be laid in the balance, against that infinite and incredible weight of reproach, with which it will certainly pay him home at that day?

For, could he persuade the mountains to cover him; or could he hide himself in the bosom of the great deep; or could he wrap himself in the very darkness of hell; yet still his sin would fetch him out of all, and present him naked, open, and defenceless before that tribunal, where he must receive the sentence of everlasting confusion.

AND now, for a conclusion; this whole discourse is a strong recommendation of virtue and innocence; of innocence, which makes a man's face to shine in publick, whose actions and behaviour it governs in private.

For the innocent person lives not under the continual torment of doubts and fears, lest he should be discovered: for the light is his friend; and to be seen and looked upon, is his advantage.

We have seen, how poor a thing secrecy is to corrupt a rational man's behaviour;

how many ways there are, whereby the most wise and just governor of the world is pleased to defeat, and befool the confidence, of the subtlest, and the slyest sinners; how slight and transparent all their finest contrivances of secrecy are; while, notwithstanding all the private recesses, and dark closets, which they so much trust in, the windows of heaven are still open over their heads.

And now, what should the consideration of all this do, but every minute of our lives remind us, so to behave ourselves, as under the eye of that God, who seeth in secret, and will reward us openly.

S E R M O N XVI.

Measures of Charity.

[From Dr. PELLING on Charity.]

COL. III. 14.

Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

THAT infinitely wise and beneficent being that made the world, to communicate himself to his creatures, and to make them partakers of his goodness,— hath given such laws of virtue to mankind, as serve, not only to prepare us for the endless happiness of another life, but also to make us in a great measure happy in *this* life.

For those virtues are copies of God himself, transcripts of his own most blessed nature; and therefore they must necessarily tend to make us happy, because God himself is happy in them.

God's happiness consisteth in the admirable perfections of his nature; and the

higher we rise in these perfections, the greater degrees of happiness we must needs attain to, because we approach the nearer unto God, in the resemblance of whom the true and solid happiness of mankind doth consist, tho' the corrupt part of the world doth evermore place it in other things.

Those virtues that I now speak of are the divine perfections, which are the rule of God's actions towards mankind: As, the purity and *holiness* of his nature, by means whereof he hateth all manner of iniquity; his essential *truth*, by reason whereof he cannot deceive; his *faithfulness* in the performance of all his promises, upon which account he is called in scripture the *faithful God*; his *patience* and long-suffering towards the greatest criminals, not willing that any should perish; the exact *rectitude* of his will, by means whereof he offers not the least injury to any part of the creation, but is righteous and just in all his proceedings; but above all, his infinite compassion (—a God *full* of compassion, he is called), by virtue whereof he is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and plenteous in goodness,

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These perfections the ever blessed God communicates to mankind, according to their capacities; and in the exercise of these virtues, doth our true happiness consist.

It is not riches or greatness, or any worldly enjoyments, that can make our minds, or our lives happy. *Then* are we happy indeed, when we are holy as God is holy; when we are sincere and upright, constant, patient, and just, as God is; and above all, when our mercy rejoiceth over justice, as God's doth; when we put on bowels of mercy; when we are kind, and good, and tender-hearted, towards one another; when we forbear one another, and forgive one another; in short, when we love one another, as God himself loveth us all.

This is our great *perfection*; a perfection, recommended to us in scripture, under singular characters; above faith, or hope, or any other grace. And in the practice of this virtue, our truest happiness must needs consist; because it carrieth the greatest resemblance of the divine nature. *God is love*, saith the apostle; that is, the perfection of love, goodness, and charity is in him. And it is to this that we are so earnestly persuaded

suaded by the apostle in my text, when he exhorteth us *above all things to put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

For charity is not one single duty only, but comprehendeth in it all other duties. And the nature of it, in short is this; namely, it is such a principle of kindness and benevolence, as doth dispose us to do to others all the good we can; over and above that, which is their due, by the laws of common justice.—And this is to be noted carefully, in the prosecution of this subject, that we may understand the difference, between *justice* properly so called, and true *christian charity*.

The office of *justice*, is to do those things, which a man hath a civil right unto; things which he can claim and challenge; things which cannot be denied him, without manifest wrong and injury. Now this, even unrighteous and hard-hearted people are capable of doing; nor is this always a virtue, because it proceedeth many times not from choice, but necessity.

Charity is a tendernefs and goodness of mind, which constrains us to do more, than what human laws oblige us to. It is a
virtue

virtue that stirs the bowels, that moves and works upon the affections, that extends our compassion, and enlargeth our hearts beyond the common limits: A virtue, that inclines us to be benevolent unto all men; to wish them all the good their condition calls for; to be supplicants for it, on their behalf, at the throne of grace; to aid and assist them towards the obtaining of it; and, for the love of God, and for religion-sake, to help them, not only to those things which are really due from *us*, but to those things also which are necessary, fitting, and proper for *them*, tho' they be not debts in a strict sense and construction. In a word, it is a generosity of temper, that is apt to suit it self to the condition of others, according to the moving nature of their present circumstances.

The rule of *righteousness* is, to render every man his own; but this may be without charity; and therefore this alone, is beneath the generous, and noble disposition of a christian. It doth not come up to the perfect law of Christ. Charity, tho' it hath a mixture of justice in it, yet it is a great deal more; and that it may be compleat, as
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it should be, these two qualifications are very necessary :

THE ONE is, That it be of the same nature with that affection *which we have for ourselves.*

THE OTHER is, That it resemble that great love *which our blessed Saviour expressed for us all.*

I SAY, First of all, Our charity to others, must be of the same nature, with the *affection which we have for our selves.* This is the true rule of charity : especially as it is heightened and improved by the christian religion,—*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*; that is, with the same good-natured and kind affection, tho' it may be not in the same measure and degree.

There is indeed a sort of self love that is sinful, a charity that not only *beginneth* at home, but *ends* there too; when a man is for pleasing himself only; when he seeketh his own only; when he makes himself the sole end of all his actions; and would fain ingross to himself, all that is good and desirable in this world, grudging

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to his neighbour any considerable share or proportion of it. Now this is so far from being a rule of charity, that there is nothing of charity in it; nothing more opposite to the true spirit of charity, than such a selfish temper.

But there is also an *innocent* kind of self love, which necessarily riseth out of a natural principle of self preservation; when a man, notwithstanding the greatness and largeness of his mind, doth consult the good of others so, as not to neglect his own, but takes a due care of himself in the first place. This natural affection every one hath for himself; and it is attended inseparably with the two following properties:

The *one* is this;—Every one loves himself, *unfeignedly and sincerely*. To be sure, there is no flattery, no pretence, no compliment in this case. Our affections may be believed and trusted, when they speak favourably on our own side; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh. We cannot but wish our selves well; and those wishes always come from our very hearts.

And according to this rule, the christian law obligeth us, to measure out our charity
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to others. It must be love without dissimulation: love unfeigned: love, not in words or in tongue only, but in deed, and in truth.

Under colour of love, to contrive or help forward one another's misfortunes, is like the charity of him, who betrayed his Lord and Saviour with a kiss.

People are not wont to be traytors to *themselves* after such a manner. Tho', in the consequence and event, they many times *prove* their own enemies, and the worst enemies they have; yet no man betrays himself with Judas's *purpose*. The intention on which we all act, is still levelled at that, which we believe or suppose to be good for us. And this is properly to love our neighbour *as our selves*; to be as really solicitous, for his welfare in all respects as for our own; to have the same reality and sincerity of purpose; to be influenced and animated with the same quality and truth of affection, tho' the case may admit of a difference as to proportion.

The *other* property that attends all innocent love of our selves, is, that it is *firm and constant*.—Because it flows from an innate

nate principle of self-preservation, it must of necessity hold and continue, as long as nature it self lasteth. Nor can any circumstances, events, or disappointments alter any man's temper so, as to render him fickle and unsteady to himself; much less dissolve the strict band which ties his own heart to him, faster than that, which was between the souls of Jonathan and David.

And thus also must our *brotherly* love continue. Because the reasons of charity are ever the same, to wit, the obedience we owe to the law of God, and the common wants among mankind, which always call for our mutual pity and assistance; there is therefore a constant necessity, for our minds, to be always benevolently and tenderly disposed.

And altho' resentments may, and oftentimes do unavoidably happen, by reason of the ignorances of some, the passions of others, and the hereditary infirmities of us all; yet no provocations or injuries must affect men so, as to harden their spirits, or fill their bowels with gall and wormwood. Since the fixed rule is, that we must love our neighbours *as our selves*, we are no

more permitted to be weary of our charity to other men, than we permit our selves to be weary, of doing good to our own souls.

BUT there is an higher and nobler rule of charity yet; and that is, to love one another (as I observed) *as our blessed Saviour hath loved us*. Because the love even of one's self may be defective, imperfect, and mixed with some alloy; therefore the great lover of all our souls, hath made his own charity, to be the standard and measure of ours.

Upon which he calls it a *new* commandment: *A new commandment* (says he) *give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

In respect of the *matter* of it, the law of mutual charity is an *old* one; for it hath been written in the hearts of men, from the beginning; and it was expressly given by Moses to the Jews. It is a *new* commandment, in respect of that high and eminent degree, to which our blessed Saviour hath raised it. Mens charity now must bear a resemblance of his:—*Love one another as I have loved you*. This is the thing which makes it a *new* commandment indeed.

The scripture speaks of three things especially, which were peculiarly remarkable in the love of Christ:

First, that he extended his love, to open and declared *enemies*. The *old* commandment, which required the Jews to love their neighbour as themselves, permitted them to hate an enemy; nay, in some cases, bound them to express all manner of enmity against such as were aliens to the faith, and to the commonwealth of Israel.

But, saith the Apostle, *God* commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us; and when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his son: And again he saith, when we were *alienated*, and *enemies* in our minds, by wicked works.—That is to say; this was a stupendous, a most amazing expression of Christ's love, that he undertook the great work of redeeming a profligate world, wretched creatures, that had bidden God defiance, that were haters of all that is good and holy, and thereby had brought themselves into a lost and damnable condition.

And yet this he did voluntarily, and of his

own accord ; when there was nothing in the world to move him to it, but his own infinite compassion, and tenderness only.

The *second* thing that was peculiar and new in the love of Christ, was, that he was *beforehand* with his enemies, in these expressions of his goodness to them. *Ye have not chosen me, (says he,) but I have chosen you.* And saith St. John, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us:* Meaning,—that this is a clear and astonishing demonstration of his goodness, that in transacting the mysterious business of reconciliation, he was pleased to have the first hand ; that he prevented us with his own early offers ; and surprised us with terms of peace and happiness, when no such thing was either desired, or expected, or so much as thought of by the world.

But, *Thirdly*, That which was most peculiar of all, most eminent and wonderful in the love of Christ, was his *dying* for his enemies. There is not, in the *old* commandment, a syllable of any obligations to such an high degree of charity as this is, of laying down their lives, no not for their brethren.

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And one reason of it is, because length of days, and temporal felicity, was the great reward, that was plainly and expressly promised under the law, to such as kept it. And therefore they were not bound by any principle of pure charity, to part, for any man's sake, with that, which was the greatest blessing the law could give them.

So that Christ's dying, as he did, the just for the unjust, was the sublimest act of love that could be. For greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his *friend*: Only our Saviour's own charity was far greater, in laying down his most precious life, even for his enemies.

His commandment therefore, that we should love one another, as he himself hath loved us, is altogether a *new* one. Such charity was never before required of the world: Such charity was never heard of before: Charity of such a vast height and measure, was quite a new thing. *Scarcely for a righteous man will any one die*, saith the apostle; *tho' peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die*. Yet God commended his love towards us, (it was infinitely beyond all the charity that ever had

been among men)—in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

AND now, by what hath been said, we may easily discern, the true and genuine nature of that charity, which is properly called christian.

It is such a benevolent and tender disposition of soul, as inclineth us to do, not those things only, which the laws of common justice require us to do; but moreover all such kind and obliging offices, as becometh creatures of the most compassionate hearts, and godlike tempers; to be affected with the sense of other mens wants, as well as our own; to pity them as our selves; to wish and promote their good, with such unfeigned desires, and unwearied endeavours, as if our own welfare were concerned: And because our blessed Saviour vouchsafed to express a common love to us all, we are to follow his most blessed steps, in expressing our charity to mankind, as long as we live in the world; to bless and pray for, and to do good to our very enemies to offer them terms of favour; to give them testimonies of a reconcilable temper; to encourage

courage and excite them to be reconciled, by our example; by shewing them our own bowels of compassion; and by letting them see, how kind, humble, meek, long-suffering, and patient we our selves are; and how ready to forgive them:—In short, to have such ardent affections unto all men, and especially unto all christians, as to serve them willingly, not only with our wishes, and labours, and substance, but (when need requires) with our very lives also: Tho' life be so dear a matter, and (as it is expressed in the book of Job) all that a man hath will he give for his life; yet upon great occasions, and in pressing circumstances, and for weighty and noble ends, to be ready as our blessed Saviour was, to die for others, after all other services done for them:—This is to have that fervent, and perfect, and true charity, which the christian religion recommendeth to us: And this is the thing which the apostle requires of us, when he exhorteth *above all things to put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

S E R M O N XVII.

Excellence of Charity.

[From Dr. PELLING on Charity.]

I TIM. I. 5.

Now the end of the commandment is charity.

THIS is that great virtue which is the distinguishing characteristick of the followers of Christ; by which is to be understood, not one single instance of our duty only, but a complication of all duties: for charity in the scripture sense always signifieth an universal love both of God and man; and more particularly, a kind and benevolent affection towards all other men, willing to do them good, and desirous of their welfare, both temporal and eternal.

Our Saviour hath told us, that upon the love of God and of man hang all the law and the prophets; which is the same in other words with this expression of the apostle in my text, where he tells us, that *the end of the commandment is charity.*

In

In discoursing hereupon, I shall shew the great excellency and usefulness of this virtue in the several following particulars :

I. I shall shew, What great good a charitable temper doth to a man's own mind.

II. How effectually it helps us, to answer the ends of the gospel dispensation.

III. How near it brings us to God even in this world. And,

IV. How it prepares us for the everlasting happiness of another.

I. I AM to shew, What great good a charitable temper doth, to a man's own mind.

Tho' a crown of righteousness, a glorious and perfect reward, be laid up and reserved for us against the day of judgment ; yet all virtue brings us something of a present reward. As it cleanseth the spirit from the corruptions of the world ; so it replenishes the soul, with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure : And by these means, as well the holiness, as the joy of a future state, beginneth here.

Now, of those graces, which at once *purify* and *delight* the mind, a spirit of charity is one, and perhaps the greatest. It rids

the soul of several vices, which affect the conscience with the greatest guilt, and therefore must of consequence bring the greatest plague; vices which crucify the very soul, and make every one his worst tormentor; as pride, envy, malice, and such like.

These are peculiarly called the sins of the devil; and therefore it is fit, they should carry a hell with them. It is impossible for such evil qualities, to reign in a breast, where a charitable heart lies. Kind spirits are not wont to be haughty, imperious, and tyrannical; especially towards those they love: much less are they wont to be grieved, and afflicted at their prosperity; or to seek their hurt. Such vices are altogether inconsistent with charity; and they always grow out of ill nature, as weeds out of an uncultivated soil; and one would think men should shun them rather, because they always sting the very mind that produceth them.

Hearts that are the proper and kindly soil of virtue, are never sensible of this uneasiness; because they are free from the causes of it. And were the insides of men to be thoroughly discovered, it would most assuredly

surely be found, that none are so easy and quiet within, so satisfied in their minds, as those that have generous affections for all mankind. If in such breasts there be any dissatisfactions, it is because their kind endeavours are not successful; or else because they are not able to do all the good they would.

Uncharitable wretches know not the pleasure of doing good; nor what peace and complacency returns into ones bosom, by every charitable action, nay sometimes, by a bare charitable purpose and design, when some cross accident hinders the execution of it.

In short, neither riches, nor honour, nor power, nor any thing else, can bring a man such serenity and divine pleasure, as a pure soul; a soul from whence good actions flow, like a gentle and limpid stream from a clear fountain. Tho' misfortunes from abroad may affect such a man, yet comparatively they are not sharp; and right reason can help to take away that little uneasiness there is in them. It is an evil conscience that is truly grievous and galling: It is this that creates griefs from within; griefs that
are

are more heavy and afflictive, than any accidents from without.

And therefore the true way to have solid peace within, is to have minds full of integrity; and instead of entertaining any dishonest purposes, to be always virtuously disposed, and above all, to be kindly, and benevolently inclined, and to do all the good that lieth in our power.

And thus it appeareth, what great good a charitable temper doth to a man's own mind.

I proceed,

II. To shew, How effectually it helps us, to answer the ends of the gospel dispensation.

The grace of God, saith St. Paul, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Which shews, that the design of the gospel covenant is, to reclaim mankind to the love and practice of all manner of virtue. Because God is a most perfect being himself, of infinite goodness and perfectness in his nature;
his

his blessed purpose is, to imprint upon our souls his own image, according to the capacity of our finite faculties. And in order hereunto he hath given us by his own son, the brightness of his glory, not only the most excellent promises, all confirmed and sealed with his blood upon the cross; but moreover the most perfect example, and the most perfective duties.

Now, of these duties, this of universal charity and love is the chief. For love being such a divine affection, the fruits of it must needs be divine too, if it be sincere and zealous. As for instance; If our love to God, be pure and hearty, it cannot but move us to a solicitous care, of doing nothing that is repugnant to God's will and holiness; because this affection is naturally attended with an earnest desire to please and imitate its object, or the party whom we intirely love.

So also, if a man's love to *himself* be rational and regular, it must needs put him upon doing himself all the good, especially all the *spiritual* good, he can; because his spiritual part, the soul, is to live for ever,
and

and therefore requires his tenderest care, that it may be everlastingly happy.

The same inclination doth true charity work in us towards all *other men*; to be beneficial to them likewise: for it always operates, according to the nature of the thing, and according to the condition of the object.

It cannot possibly be of any advantage to our Maker; because he is out of the reach of our charity, and too high for it. *Can a man* (says Job) *be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the almighty, that thou art righteous; or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? And again; If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he of thy hand?* Alas, none of our goodness extendeth unto him. He neither needs it, nor is he capable of being benefited by it; because he is infinitely perfect, and happy in himself.

But our love to God hath *this* effect; it makes us admire and adore him, serve and worship, and endeavour to please him, and to be like unto him; and so, it is an instrument

ment of *godliness*, as well as of *sobriety* and *righteousness*.

In this respect, it may be said to be the fulfilling of the whole law. And thus the apostle argues, *He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

We cannot be injurious to our own souls, or to the rest of mankind, or to God himself, but it must proceed from the want of those enlarged hearts, and those fervent and tender affections, which the gospel requires of us all.

Here then we should employ our greatest pains, and use our utmost endeavours, to kindle in us a true spirit of charity: For this is the end of the gospel dispensation.

The

III. THING I proposed to shew, was, that a charitable temper is conducive to the bringing

bringing of us near unto God, even in *this* world.

God is love, saith the scripture: Not only because all love is of God, as the origin and fountain of it; but because it is one of the infinite beauties, and glories of his nature; so essential to him, and so perfect in him, that he is the most transcendent and excellent example of love; made up of it so, that he may be well called *love it self*.

By reason of this love, God extendeth his goodness to all his creatures, and especially to mankind; intending and ordering all things here, for their good; threatning and admonishing, commanding and forbidding, assisting, and strengthening, cherishing and chastising them, in order still to that great end, their own good; and in all the methods and dispensations of his providence, expressing his mercy and tenderness towards us, as it is most agreeable to his wisdom, and as far as it is consistent with the honour due from creatures to their Creator.

Nor are the wickedest men denied a share and portion of his goodness. For tho' by the rules of strict justice, he might without
any

any more ado consign them to everlasting misery, and cut them off in the midst of their impieties, yet he offers to all, peace and reconciliation, in, and by, and for the sake of his son, whom he sent into the world, to seek and to save that which was lost, to the end that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And to express the sincerity of his desire in this matter, he daily shews the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; that thereby he may lead wicked men to repentance, not to be repented of. Nay they have their portion, even of the things of *this* life too; nor are any cast out of the hands of that provident and supreme governor of all things, who causeth his sun to shine, upon the evil, and upon the good; and who sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.

This great goodness of God towards us all, our Saviour himself makes use of, as a powerful argument and motive, for our charity and tenderness towards one another.

And truly, if we consider the infinite *perfections* of God, by reason whereof, he standeth not in the least need of any, nor of all

all his creatures; the infinite greatness of his *majesty* above us, and its distance from us;—by reason whereof, he might look down upon us with scorn and contempt;—his infinite *power* over us, by reason whereof he might easily cast us down into the bottomless pit upon any provocation; his infinite *holiness* and *excellency*, by reason whereof every provocation comes to be of infinite demerit; and together with all this, if we consider the infinite disproportion, that is between the sins acted against him, and the faults we commit against one another, who stand all of us upon the same level, and need all of us each others assistance; nor have we any power over one another, but what is given to us, and is precarious; nor do we provoke one another, but with offences which perhaps we are all of us guilty of in our turns; If, I say, we consider all this, we must needs discover, a great deal of force in this argumentation,—that since God so loveth us, so pitieth us, so forbear-eth us, so expresseth his mercy and compassion to us; certainly we ought also, and the rather by much, to love, and pity, and
forbear,

forbear, and shew compassion and kindness unto one another.

And this it is which rendreth us like unto God. *Love is of God, saith St. John; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.* And again, *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* And again, *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit;* meaning, that temper and affection, which is so eminent in him. And again, he says, *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Here then men should lay their hands upon their hearts, and examine how they beat; what they are full of; and how they are affected: If wrath and bitterness, malice and rancour, spitefulness and uncharitableness, dwelleth in them; if self-love, unmercifulness, and cruelty hardens them; if the wants and miseries of others make none, or but very little impressions upon them;—these are very bad symptoms, plain signs, that there is very little, if any thing at all of God, in such hearts; nothing but what sa-

vours of a narrow spirit, of a mean, fordid, and brutish nature.

Humane, rational souls should have more exalted faculties; souls, that are so many rays of the divinity; souls, that are of a noble and heavenly extraction; What can so become such beings, as thoughts that are beneficial like the sun-beams; affections, that are as large as the universe; motions and operations, like his, who was the redeemer of souls; whose whole life was, to go about doing good?

His miracles, as well as his discourses, and laws, were charity. And by those charitable works, he shewed himself to be the son of God. Nor may we think, we can give the world, or our own selves, any satisfactory evidence of our own relation to his Father or him, but by works of charity, as his were; by doing good to every man, as it lies in our power, without distinction; by intreating them gently; by bearing wrongs and indignities with meekness of spirit; by putting our cause into God's hands, without self-revenge; by blessing and wishing well to our very enemies; and by

expressing

expressing our sincere affections to all mankind.

These things do naturally carry a great deal of force with them: So that if no obligations were upon us from any laws to this purpose, the divine excellence of these actions would recommend them to our practice, because they are godlike actions; and therefore must needs be of the highest excellence in their own nature.

But besides this, we are to consider yet, in the

IV. AND last place, How helpful a spirit of charity is to us, not only in bringing us near unto God in *this* world, but also in fitting and preparing us for the everlasting happiness of *another*.

Many virtues are required, to dispose us for the enjoyment of that happiness; to make us capable of it; to render us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Neither will the decrees, nor the power, nor the mercy of God, bring us to that enjoyment, without due qualifications on our part, because there can be no true happiness, but where there is a correspon-

dence and suitableness between the mind and the thing; if a man be not pleased with what he enjoys, nor finds any delightful relish in it, it is impossible for him to be happy by enjoying it; nor can heaven itself be a place of pleasure to those, whose minds have as little taste of those divine satisfactions, as a vitiated palate hath of the most pleasant meats and drinks.

To prepare our selves for those delights, it is necessary to transform our souls into the love of them now; and to accustom our selves now, to the familiar and delightful practice of those virtues, wherein the happiness of another life doth really consist.

Of which virtues, a charitable disposition is one, and a very great one; because we shall be sure, to carry that disposition with us out of this world, to continue with us everlastingly, and to make us happy indeed, in the enjoyment of a suitable society of blessed spirits, which are all made up of love.

Charity never faileth; saith the apostle: But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish

vanish away. But charity endureth for ever. It is an inseparable glory, of the souls of just men made perfect.

UPON all which accounts, it concerneth us, as much as our everlasting happiness is worth, by all possible acts of charity, to bring our minds to such a loving frame and temper, as when we die, may be suitable to the state and condition of heaven; where there will be no more uneasinesses; where envy and pride shall cease; and malice and discord shall be no more.

S E R M O N XVIII.

Several properties of Charity.

[From Dr. PELLING on Charity.]

I C O R. XIII. 4.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up.

THE apostle is here speaking of that great and comprehensive duty of the christian life; an universal love and benevolence towards mankind. He had before described it unto us in its true nature and foundation; and is here exemplifying it, in its effects and manner of operation. For the instances and expressions of it are manifold and various; and therefore it is a great mistake to suppose, that all charity is comprehended under the name of *alms-giving*. That indeed is one expression of charity, when our alms come from a charitable heart; for if *that* be wanting, all our alms loseth the name of charity. *Tho' I*
give

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give all my goods (says he) to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. You see, that in the apostle's account, alms-deeds may be without charity; that is when vanity or ostentation is the principle from whence they flow. But tho' they come from a right principle, from a kind and compassionate heart, yet are they but a little part of charity; as we find by St. Paul's description of its several branches in this chapter, of which my text containeth divers instances: *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up.*

FIRST; *Charity suffereth long, and is kind.*—By this is meant, that a charitable person is tender, compassionate, and beneficent, both in disposition and actions; ready in every respect to do all the good he can. By giving us a *description*, St. Paul shews us a *duty*: and his meaning is, that instead of hating, and doing evil to one another, we should be tenderly affected, and useful to each other, ready from our hearts to do to one another all the good offices which lie in our power.

Now for the due practising of this matter, the laws of charity require of us, in the first place, *that we have a true inward sense of other mens wants and afflictions.* This is that which the holy Scripture calls *tender-heartedness, bowels of mercy, and having compassion one of another.* By which expressions is meant, that we should sympathize with all that are in distress, and have a fellow-feeling of one another's afflictions. For where mens hearts are so hard, that their brethrens calamities make little or no impressions upon them, there it is impossible for charity to be so kindly, free, and generous, as the laws of christianity do require.

This was one great reason, why the son of God was pleased to take human nature upon him; that he might be sensible of our common miseries. *In all things, says the apostle, it behoved him, to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.* And again; *We have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted* (that is, tried by afflictions, acquainted with sorrows and griefs,) *like as we are,*

His

His own thorough sense of the hardships of the world, made him the more willingly go about doing good, during his abode in the flesh; and the more merciful to mankind now; since all power in earth and heaven hath been put into his hands.

And this will be in us, the principle of right christian charity to one another; to be painfully affected with the sufferings of others. And to this end we should use all possible means, to mould our hearts rightly, to soften them into a tender and compassionate temper; and to let all moving considerations sink deep into them. Because we are the body of Christ, and all of us members of it, joined together by the same bonds of faith and hope; we should be all animated with the same spirit of charity too; we should have, as St. Paul speaks, *the same care one for another; so that if one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it.*

But this (if it be all) is not enough. It is poor kindness, just to be troubled for another, and to say, *God help him.* Grief, and sorrow, and anguish, and good wishes, must break out into *action*; else, all the rest is but good-natured compliment. The laws

of charity bind us, not to be barren, or unfruitful, but to be full of good works, according as our own capacities, and according as the wants and necessities of other people are.

First, to do to their *souls* all the good we can. This is the noblest work of charity, because it is done to the noblest part of man. And because there is a necessity for the soul, upon its parting from the body, to pass into an everlasting, unchangeable state, either of happiness or misery; greater charity there cannot be, than to minister such helps and means to it now, as serve to prepare it for a blessed eternity: As, to instruct it in the paths of duty, to teach it the true fear of God, to subdue its sinful and inordinate appetites, and to bring it to an habitual practice of all manner of piety and virtue.

Moreover; Charity obligeth us to express a tender regard to the *worldly* necessities of others also, according to our abilities. God, who hath ordered all things in number, weight, and measure, hath of his great goodness and wisdom, made variety of conditions among mankind, and hath so suited mens capacities, fortunes, and abilities, to their

their several states of life, that every one is to be useful in some respect or other to the rest.

And because no man can live alone, or support himself in a state of utter separation from all others; common necessity ties us all together, like so many limbs and members into one body, that each may minister its assistance, towards the maintenance of the whole.

Now so far as any one wants, and becomes feeble, so far it is disabled and hindered from lending its own help to its fellows. So that were nothing else to be considered, but the preservation, and common interest of human society; that alone would be enough to set all hands at work, upon extending themselves in acts of charity.

But our obligations to it are the greater still, because the divine being, who careth for us all, hath made that which is a civil duty, to be a part of our religion too; that which the necessities of human society call for, he himself requires as necessary, in order to our eternal interest.

Upon both accounts therefore, as we are men, and christians also, we must be very careful

careful to express the benevolent disposition of our hearts, by all outward acts of beneficence, according as our stations and capacities are, and according as the needs and sufferings of other people require our helping hand; as, to save life, when it is in danger; to relieve the oppressed; to take care of the sick; to help the infirm; to feed the hungry; to cloath the naked; to cherish the comfortless; to lift up the head that hangeth down; to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction; and to send up to the God of comfort, our charitable intercessions for all.

Thus, *Charity suffereth long, and is kind.*

THE NEXT property of it in my text, is this; *Charity envieth not*: That is, will not be disturbed or grieved at another's happiness; or at any thing, wherein another excels. The scripture calls this passion, *an evil eye*; and some of the ancients have compared it to a *disease* in the eye, by means whereof, it cannot endure to behold any splendid or bright object.

Of all the distempers of the mind, there is none that proceedeth from a worse, nor yet

yet from a weaker cause. For it is not grounded upon any personal crime, but upon a wicked opinion of partiality in providence, and upon an abusive conceit of one's own deserts.

Where is any injustice or blame in the man, if God pleaseth to bless him, with outward or inward gifts, above his neighbours?—Yet this is the original of envy,—that for great and wise reasons, God doth dispense his goodness to some, with a more liberal hand, than what he extendeth unto others. And can any thing be more wicked, than to quarrel with the divine being for his bounty? Or can any thing be more unreasonable, than to find fault with a man, because he is happily made a partaker of it? For *anger*, and *hatred*, and some other vices, there might be some tolerable pretence, did not the laws of religion forbid them: But this vice is the most unfortunate of all, that it hath no covering but an evil heart.

But I am not now to consider so much the unreasonable nature of envy, as how contrary and opposite it is to a spirit of *charity*. For, whereas a charitable person wisheth well to all, and endeavours, as far as in him lies,

lies, to do good to all ; the envious wretch grieves and pines, murmurs and complains, frets and rages at his neighbour's happiness.

Such a wretch is not so much as charitable to *himself*; because his great (yea almost his *only*) kindness, is to a vice, that is his cruellest enemy; to a vice, that cuts and pierces him to the quick; to a vice, that eats daily upon his vitals, and into his heart; and in return for its entertainment, gives him nothing but gall and wormwood.

And how can it be expected, that a man so *imbittered* should be charitable to any other. *If you have envying and bitter strife in your hearts* (saith St. James), *glory not, and lye not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. For where envying and strife is, says he, there is confusion and every evil work.* There is meanness of spirit, covetousness, detraction, hatred, lying, malice, fraud, oppression, partiality, cruelty, and too often blood-guiltiness it self. The first blood that ever was shed upon the earth, was shed out of mere envy; because the Lord had respect unto *Abel*, and to his offering. Yet how was it a crime in *Abel*;

or why was he to be blamed, that God loved him?

An envious spirit being so inconsistent with charity, so repugnant to it, so utterly destructive of it; we should use all possible means, to pluck out of our souls this poisonous root of bitterness.

Then shall we be charitable indeed, when we unfeignedly desire, not only the eternal, but even the temporal prosperity of all men, and strive according to our ability to promote it. Then shall we express our charity indeed, when we seek not our own only, but consider the cases, and suit our selves to the circumstances of others, as if they were our own too; when we bless God for them, and are satisfied and pleased to see our neighbour's welfare and prosperity. Then are we charitable to *all men*, when instead of fretting against any, we take compassion upon the worst, lamenting and pitying their unhappiness as well as sin, when they abuse and misapply the mercies of God to them.

Then are we charitable indeed, when we rejoice for those gifts which the divine bounty bestows, especially upon good men; when we are thankful for them, and make
this

this christian use of them, as to become our selves the wiser and better for them.

Then are we charitable indeed, when we are contented with our own present portion, and satisfied with other mens; entirely submitting to the will of God, with this comfortable persuasion, that in the several acts of his providence to them and us, he doth that which is best for us all; if not that which we most covet, yet that which we most need.

In short,—to acquiesce in his goodness and wisdom, considering how much we enjoy above what we really deserve, how many thousands that deserve as well come vastly short of us, and how little short we our selves comparatively come of those who deserve better;—To put a due value upon every the least blessing of God, and with all modest resignation to leave our selves, our fortunes, and our brethren, to his government and disposal:—This is at once to be wise, patient, pious, and charitable also. *Charity envieth not.*

THE LAST property of charity in my text, is this; *Charity vaunteth not it self, is*

not

not puffed up: That is to say, It alloweth not people to be proud and arrogant, to be haughty and supercilious, to have an immodest, lofty, and over high conceit of a man's own self; or to behave himself with contempt and scorn towards those, whom he looks down upon at a distance as his inferiors.

There is hardly another vice that is more foolish, more hateful, than pride is; none that is so like to the devil's temper; none that stands in more direct opposition to all the laws of charity.

An humble mind stoops to all, tho' the meanest and lowest offices; nor is there any act of love, which it is not willing to reach out a kind hand unto, tho' it be (as it was in the case of our Saviour) to the washing of one anothers feet. And the reason is, because a truly humble man hath so modest an opinion of himself, and so high an esteem of others, that he is apt to reckon all good offices to be a kind of debt to them, and a very necessary, tho' a poor tribute of honour, to the meek and lowly Jesus.

But pride sets men so far remote from their neighbours, that to *desire* their friend-

ship, looks like incroachment; and for themselves to *offer* it, seems to them a transgressing the rules of greatness. And so, in that distance and interval between *state* on the one hand, and *meannefs* on the other, many acts of true charity are wanting, many blessed opportunities of doing good drop to the ground, and are quite lost, and perhaps too, when the necessities of poor wretches are most pressing.

Seldom do proud men think of *God* himself. *They care not for God* (saith the psalmist), *neither is God in all their thoughts*. They think not of him as their maker and benefactor, by whom they live; or as their lawgiver and judge, by whom they must be sentenced to eternity; at least they think not with that gratitude, reverence, and depth of thought, which should swallow up all their vain imaginations. And if *God* be not in their minds, it is no wonder if *men* be not there, and if they be full of nothing but themselves.

But this is not all. The case would be better, tho' they did no good, if they did no hurt neither. But pride is such an injurious and imperious vice, that where it ruleth,

ruleth, it admits of no bound but those of its own setting, and those are as uncertain as can be imagined. Pride commonly hath *covetousness* for its factor, to toil and drudge for its maintenance; and when those vices go hand in hand, nothing is safe that is within reach, as was the case of *Ahab* with regard to *Naboth's* vineyard. Ahab was sick at heart for it, and to recover his content, the poor man's blood was sought for too, as the speediest remedy.

Men of such tempers are so bloated with an opinion of their own deserts, that they fancy themselves to have a kind of right to every thing, especially if it be judged necessary and convenient. And how then can we hope for *charity*, when there is no room for *justice*? Fraud, rapine, and oppression, are the usual designs of an haughty mind; and it is the harder to stop them, because proud people are ever apt to overlook their actions; think it a diminution to obey such a thing as conscience; are too big to be taken to account; too high to ask themselves, *is there not iniquity in my right hand?*

Indeed people who are thus puffed up, have not always power to hurt others much

in their *fortunes*; but then they seldom fail to oppress them in their *fame*; which is another thing utterly inconsistent with that candor and goodness, which evermore attends a charitable temper.

Pride is always very censorious; tho' many times there is no other reason for the hard character it gives, but this only, that it may have a foil to set off it self. The greatest innocence is often reproached, because proud people care not what others deserve, but would have us to know how singular their own merits are; by exposing a neighbour, they hope we shall think the better and the more highly of them; by throwing dirt upon others faces, they think their own will appear the more beautiful; like the haughty Pharisee in the gospel, who thought to recommend himself to God, by making reflections; *I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor even as this publican.*

By this injurious and uncharitable practice, many mischiefs befall mankind; as strife, railings, animosities, violence, and all manner of outrage. So that *Solomon* saith, *Only by pride cometh contention.* It

is

is the only *natural* parent of contention: There are *accidental* causes of it, as drunkenness, passion, revenge, and the like, which bring forth strife upon preceding heats and provocations; but pride is the only vice that hath a constant, natural inclination that way, a principle that tends to strife, whether there be just provocations or no; the vice that loves it, and delights in it; and indeed that signalizeth it self chiefly by it; for, had we not reason to beware of quarrels, and to be afraid of them, for the mischievous nature and consequence of them, very little notice would be taken of proud people; they would be the most slighted and scorned, as now they are the most hated creatures in the world.

Therefore that we may beget in us a right spirit of charity, and be able duly to express it, we should learn of our great law-giver and master, to be very *lowly in heart*. We should first lay our selves low, under an awful apprehension of God's greatness, and under a just sense of our own vileness and unworthiness, to be sure in comparison of *him*; of whose perfections and glory, there is no end.

Then we should consider, with what admirable wisdom God hath ordered the world; that as all things depend upon him, so under him one thing dependeth upon another, and ministereth help to another; and in this respect or that, one thing *excelleth* another too: That man himself, tho' he struts upon the earth with such pomp and state, is beholding to the meanest creature for succour and assistance: That the most valuable things any man hath, are all borrowed, and that but for a little time too: That tho' the righteous be more excellent than his neighbour, yet it is God that makes the difference; and that we have nothing of our own, but our follies and our sins. Few think it reasonable to be proud of these; and because all the rest are debts, there is no reason for any to be proud of *them* neither.

Upon these accounts, we should break the bubble in our minds, which hath nothing in it but air, nothing about it but fantastical gaiety, to please children and fools,

The business of *a man* is to do good; and in order thereunto, we should (as the apostle expresseth it) *prefer one another in honour;*

honour; condescend to men of low estate; do nothing thro' strife or vain glory; but, in lowliness of mind, each should esteem other better than themselves.

Thus, charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up.

AND THUS have I explained the three great properties of the duty of charity in my text; *Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up.*

And may God give us grace, to shew forth the same in our lives and practices. And this for the sake of his son Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, &c.

S E R M O N XIX.

Several properties of charity.

[From Dr. PELLING on Charity.]

I COR. XIII. 5.

Doth not behave it self unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil.

TH E S E words are spoken of the great and comprehensive christian duty of *charity*. And they set forth unto us four excellent properties thereof; which in my following discourse I shall treat of in the order as they stand,

AND first of all;—Charity *doth not behave it self unseemly*: That is, It doth nothing to others that is indecent, unbecoming, or unsuitable to the excellence and honour of Christ's religion.

One great reason is, because disorderly and disgraceful actions are not only evil in their own nature, but are evil in their effects,

fects, scandalous and very hurtful in their consequences; they carry a strong infection with them, which is of evil operation; they serve to taint the minds, and corrupt the good manners and behaviour of other people that behold them; and so are apt to draw a great many more to the practice of them. This is that which the Scripture meaneth, when it speaks of *making men to sin*; of laying a *stumbling-block* in their way; of *wounding their consciences*; of *offending*, and *giving offences*.

Nothing is more natural than imitation, especially in bad things. Such is the corruption of our nature, that every one is of a soft and yielding disposition on that side, apt to receive deeper impressions from *one ill* example, than from *many good ones*.

There is a contagion in vice, which insensibly goes from one to another, till the disease becomes general. A disorderly parent teacheth his children to be licentious. An unjust, malicious, and dissolute neighbour, is a plague to a whole society, and shews others the way how to be so too. When once the infection spreadeth, the mischief

chief of it and the sin runs on, and is still propagated with the example.

Upon this account, every scandalous and shameful action is utterly repugnant to the rule of charity, because it is injurious, and injurious in the highest degree; injurious to the *souls* of men, to those precious and immortal spirits of men, for which our blessed Saviour was pleased of his own mere goodness and charity to die.

For the opening this matter a little further, it will be very useful for us to consider two famous cases, that were in the beginning of christianity, even in the days of the apostles. Then there were two hot controversies in the church, and in each case the controversy was, about a thing that was purely indifferent; no particular law, whether from the nature of the thing, or from God, or from the church, binding people to act the one way or the other. And yet in both cases, charity was the great general rule, which the apostles ordered men to go by, for fear of tempting others into sin. Which plainly shews, that to give a scandalous example, by any shameful or foul action, is a most abominable practice.

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The first case related to those *Jews*, who were newly brought over to christianity. Many of them were so weak in their faith, so uninstructed as yet in the doctrine of christian liberty, that they thought it still necessary for them to observe the old Jewish sabbath, and other solemn days, which Moses had appointed, and to abstain totally from some sorts of meats which had been forbidden by Moses. Others again made no scruple about these things, but looked upon those days and meats as indifferent now under the gospel; and accordingly they used their christian liberty as to both. —And the whole history of this matter is set forth in the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans.

Now tho' St. Paul gave this rule to each party, *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth:* Yet the apostle seems most inclined (as charitable men are apt to be) to the weaker side. And, that charity might have the casting hand in the whole controversy, he directed those who were thoroughly instructed, not to use their full lawful liberty in the presence of a weak
3 brother,

brother, lest he should be tempted, either to do as others did, tho' against his conscience, or else to forsake the christian communion; either of which would have been a deadly sin. *Judge this* (saith the apostle), *that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.* And again, *If thy brother be grieved* (or scandalized) *by thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably: destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.* And again, *For meat destroy not the work of God; All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak.*

The other case, related to those profelytes who had been brought over to christianity from *heathenism*: Of which we find the account in the 8th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians.—Whereas there was a general custom among the heathens, to eat part of those sacrifices, which had been offered to their supposed deities; many of them, tho' they had received the christian faith, continued this custom nevertheless; believing

believing still, that the things they worshipped were real beings, and that they themselves were better by much for partaking of those their sacrifices.

Others knew that these were grossly mistaken; and were convinced, that those idols were nothing but fictitious and imaginary deities. However these too resorted to the idol feasts, for compliance sake; yet believing them not to be religious, but ordinary meals.

Now this was a very shameful and evil practice. For tho' the eating of those meats, singly and in it self considered, was a thing indifferent; yet the scandal it gave, made it utterly unlawful, because it was a violation of charity: it confirmed others in their old heathenish opinion, and encouraged them to go on still, in their heathenish, sinful course.

To rectify this matter therefore, St. Paul discourseth to them, shewing, that tho' he and others had a very vile opinion of the heathen idols; yet it was a most shameful and wicked thing, to lay a stumbling block in their brethrens way (*that* is the expression again); that is, to minister unto them any occasion

occasion of falling into, or of continuing in a sinful practice. *Meat* (says he) *commendeth us not unto God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse. But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours, become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if a man see thee, who hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idols temple; shall not the conscience of him that is weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? And thro' thy knowledge, shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. And at the close of that chapter, he declared his own peremptory resolution; that if meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh while the world stood, lest he should make his brother to offend.*

Here then is a noble rule of charity, for us all to go by; namely, To be very careful that we do not at any time encourage others to do evil, by our indecent and scandalous examples in any case; not so much as in the use of things purely indifferent, much less by doing things that have a moral and natural evil in them: such things are of a most shameful nature, and of very dangerous

dangerous consequence; and therefore we should always beware of them, lest we be answerable for other men's destruction and ruin as well as our own.

THE *Second* property of charity in my text is expressed thus;—*Seeketh not her own.* That is to say; a charitable person seeketh not his own private advantage only, but the profit of others too; and especially the good of the whole community, to which he stands related.

This is included in the very notion of charity; for it is a kind, benevolent disposition, that makes us lend an helping hand, wherever it is wanting.

The truth is, this is charity to one's self too, as well as to others, if we consider the matter rightly. That we may be tied, and linked, and bound close together by mutual love and kindness, God hath so ordered the state of this world, that all men have a necessary dependance one upon another; nor would there be such a shiftless, pitiful, miserable creature in the world as man, were he to live alone, and by himself.

Every

Every one of us stands in need of the society and help of others, as much as we need food or air. He needs the magistrate, to protect him under God; the statesman, to consult and advise for him; the divine, to instruct him; the tradesman, to supply him with a world of necessities; the soldier, to fight for him; the painful husbandman, to find him bread; the poor servant, to work and sweat for him; nay, the greatest and richest man on earth needeth the very beggar, to do him good: he needs even the blind, and the lame; the hungry, and naked; the comfortless mother, and her sucking child: For what? Why to lay up his treasure in heaven for him. For these are God's receivers. By their hands it is, that men lend unto the Lord, that they may receive themselves ten thousand fold at the hands of Christ.

Every one's good is lodged more or less every where, just as his necessities are; some part in one hand, some in another; and the greatest part in the common good, in the joint stock of the community, in the prosperity and good of the whole kingdom.

It

It is a great mistake for a man to think, that all his interest lieth at home, in his family, and in himself, and within the compass of his own propriety. There indeed lieth his particular and private interest; but what is that worth, if his publick interest be destroyed? if the welfare of the whole nation be destroyed and gone? Every man's particular happiness is bound and wrapt up in that, and depends on that; nor is it possible for the body to suffer, but each member must suffer in proportion.

And hence it follows, that he is a fool, as well as an ill neighbour, that seeketh his own private welfare only, neglecting and overlooking the common good, which is the main, and which supports and preserves all the rest.

It is sinful self love, that looks at home only, and is busy altogether within its own walls. The office of charity is to look abroad; to see how the publick fares; to consult and mind the publick good; to lend an helping hand in all publick necessities; and with all possible care to avoid every thing that is directly injurious to the common happiness, and destructive of it.

To expresse our charity therefore in this respect also, as every one should seek not his own, but another's welfare, so all of us are obliged after an especial manner, to study and provide for the peace of the community, whereunto we all belong. Peace is the greatest happiness upon earth; as it is the state of heaven; the blessing that gives a relish to all the rest; that makes all other enjoyments sweet and delightful; and for that reason, the holy Scripture is wont to expresse all manner of happiness, by the general name of peace.

To destroy or disturb this, is to be a publick enemy; and where a spirit of contention reigneth and striveth, the contest must be very dangerous to the whole body, because it is as it were in the bowels. It were better living in a desert, and to wait for one's food, as Elijah did, by the ministry of ravens, than with a generation of people that are enemies to peace; restless, froward, troublesome, malicious, ready for any opportunity to vex and scourge one another.

In such a case, society, which should be one's great comfort, is his greatest plague; for men are thereby the stronger to hurt him:

him : Ill nature works till it raiseth a confederacy, and then mischiefs run with an inundation ; like calamities in a civil war, where force carries it, and armed enemies consider not what they *should*, but what they *can* do.

To prevent the plagues of this life, as well as the torments of another ; the laws of the most holy and charitable Jesus do require us to be peace-makers—to live in peace—to follow peace with all men—to seek peace, and ensue it—to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace—if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men—and, to follow after the things that belong to our peace.

And certainly, if it be charity to wish others, and to do to others all the good we can, it must be the greatest charity to seek that which is the best thing in the world for them. And when our charity is thus large and extensive, it will in some measure resemble the goodness of God, whose mercy is over all his works.

THE *Third* instance of charity in my text, is expressed thus ; *is not easily pro-*

voked: That is, A charitable man is not presently moved out of a calm and composed state; and where there shall be sufficient and just cause of resentment, he will not suffer his passion to swell beyond a due measure.

More particularly, All kinds of *revenge*, are utterly inconsistent with a true spirit of charity. To which purpose we are strictly commanded, not to avenge ourselves; not to recompense evil for evil; but to overcome evil with good; to be patient, merciful, and kind; if an enemy hunger, to feed him; if he thirst, to give him drink.

Christianity is the highest improvement of virtue; and the laws of it are so strict and perfect, so sublime and pure, that all tinctures of malice and ill-will are a violation of them. The spirits of christians should be above all such base alloy; they should be refined and raised to that high and noble pitch, and true greatness, as to pass by affronts with meekness and charity, and (if possible) with slightings and disdain.

That holy and just one, who descended from heaven to cleanse, raise, and perfect our nature, took great care to rid us of all
evil

evil affections of this kind, by the noblest precepts, and by his own (the noblest and most perfect) example.

The infinite excellence and dignity of his divine nature, made all offences against him swell to infinite degrees of guilt; and consequently rendered the actions of them, liable to all the degrees of punishment, which infinite justice might have inflicted.

And yet, with what evenness of mind did he endure all reproaches, indignities, disgrace, stripes, buffetings, wounds, nails, and even the cross too? He bore all, tho' from the rudest, the vilest, the most malicious hands, with mildness and patience, with meekness and self denial, with humility and resignation, with candour and the highest charity, to his last breath. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. And what was this for? Why (saith the apostle) Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.

THE *Fourth* property of charity in my text, is expressed thus;—*thinketh no evil.*—A charitable man is not suspicious of evil designs at every turn; is not jealous headed; is so far from working evil himself, that he is not apt to entertain a wicked mistrust, of others working evil against him.

A suspicious temper must needs be contrary to true christian charity, because it is the original of anger; and consequently, the original cause of those manifold mischiefs, which follow that wild and outrageous passion. Not only families and neighbourhoods, but whole kingdoms also have suffered in an high degree, by reason of evil surmises, and those also sometimes very unreasonable and groundless.

Therefore to express our charity in this respect too, we should always judge of men with all possible candour; put as favourable constructions as we can upon their actions; and conceive such a kind opinion of them, tho' the action be somewhat hard, as we are wont to have of the miscarriages of a friend, which we are willing to call so many slips, errors, and indiscretions only.

Every

Every thing hath two handles; and ill-natured people are evermore apt to lay hold of the wrong one. When a fault is done, they are ready strait to think, the injury or affront was intended, and that maliciously. Whereas a man of thought, and temper, and of a christian spirit, would take the thing by the other handle; and call it human weakness, or inadvertency, or by some other such soft name, which charity might easily find out, to cover the nakedness of a poor man, like unto one's self.

Sometimes indeed, malice cannot be hid, under all its pretences and disguises: Sometimes, the inward wickedness is plain and palpable. And yet even in such a case there must be charity, tho' mixed with caution; the wisdom of the serpent, with the innocence of the dove.

But till the blackness of the heart appears clearly, we must not judge of men with such severity, as if we had God's knowledge, and were able to discover the malignity of the very intention. Favourable and candid interpretations, from unsuspicious hearts, are always the safest and best. And the true way to bring us all to that temper,

is, to be sincere and simple minded our own selves, as we would have all others be; free from arts, guile, or fordid purposes.

For certainly, none are so suspicious of other men, as they who are conscious to themselves of their own guilt; they that practise the arts of dissimulation, and dishonesty; they that leave the plain and easy methods of sincerity, to deal in the intricate mysteries of subtilty and craft, without regard to a good conscience.

In a word, The ends of human society are lost, where truth and simpleness of mind fail; and that confidence which supports conversation and commerce is gone, where hearts and tongues are of different pieces; where civilities are traps; where promises are only to draw men in; where a smile is an artificial gloss upon a treacherous mind; where contracts are methods of oppression; where fair pretences are flattering ways of robbing in the dark; and where shews of friendship are to do the work of an enemy, but with greater safety, and with more certain success.

Where there is such falseness, such hypocrisy, and deceit, people must needs be as
shy

shy and fearful of each other, as if they were in danger of wolves and bears.

And for the curing of all suspicions, nothing is so necessary, as that simplicity of heart I am now speaking of; sincere meanings; openness in traffick; plainness in speech; innocence in society; faithfulness in promises; truth in friendship; honesty and peaceableness in designs; sweetness in behaviour; good nature in our mutual offices; and all other possible expressions of a pure, harmless, and undisguised religion:—And this is the great work of christian charity.

SERMON XX.

Several properties of Charity.

[From Dr. PELLING on Charity.]

I COR. XIII. 7.

Beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.

IT is the great and comprehensive duty of *charity*, in commendation whereof these words are delivered by the apostle. Amongst many other excellent properties thereof, these are four; that it *beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.*

AND, first; Charity *beareth all things.* The proper sense of the word is, that it *covereth* or *concealeth* all things (which are done amiss.)—To lay things to one's charge, which he is not guilty of, is very *unjust*; to blame him upon mere suspicion, is very *rash*; and to divulge every fault, tho' we certainly know it, is very *uncharitable*.

Where

Where the end of making another's faults known, is neither necessary nor good, nor just nor charitable, but rather mean and hurtful; we should be as tender of a neighbour's fame, as of our own; and no more speak of his crimes, than we would discover his *secrets*, which in conscience and honour we are bound to keep in the dark.

One great reason for which charity requires us to be very careful in this matter, is this: Because the divulging of another's offences is so far from doing him any good, that it is a probable way to harden him in a course of wickedness.

Shame is sometimes the strongest bridle, to restrain people from things that are of bad report. If we take off that check, there is no staying them; but they turn to their course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

Nor is there a more ready means to make them shameless, than to expose those mis-carriages to open view, which they cannot but like the less, because they are afraid of a discovery.

Private admonitions, if kindly and discreetly tendred to the persons themselves,
often

often prove a successful method of reclaiming those who are not as yet thoroughly hardened; because those admonitions are an argument of friendship, which makes the softest and deepest impression. For which reason, saith our Saviour, *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.* This is the most likely way to gain, or to reform him. Whereas to proclaim, or whisper out his faults, especially to persons unconcerned, and that too with pleasure, and as a sort of entertainment, is the ready means of rendering his heart obdurate, and of making all counsels to recoil and have no effect; because in this case, it is not charity that speaks, but ill nature and a designing mind.

And moreover, Besides the mischief done to the sinner himself, by uncharitable detections, no little hurt also is done to those to whom the sin is told. By hearing of ill things, people learn insensibly to do them; because there is a contagion in all wickedness; whereby the minds of those, to whom it is discovered, are infected by degrees, if there be not a very strong preservative to keep

keep out the pestilence, which is rarely provided in those cases.

For it is not usual with us to lend an ear, but to things we are very *willing* to hear of; and by this means, an evil report doth naturally cast the stronger influence, and doth naturally make the deeper impression, the mind being *disposed* for it beforehand.

Upon which account, it is necessary for every good man, with all possible care to preserve his *ear* from infection, lest it pass thro' that to the heart. For a story told of another many times becomes an example: So that by being made acquainted with the faults of others, people insensibly are apt to become worse themselves.

Therefore to express our charity in this case, let us carefully observe that advice of the son of *Sirach*, *Rehearse not unto another what is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives; and altho' thou canst without offence, yet reveal them not.*

For charity sake, every story is not to be told; for tho' it be true, it may be hurtful; tho' it be not hurtful in the first report, it
may

may be so in the consequence: Because fame is like the cloud which the prophet's servant saw, in the 18th chapter of the first book of Kings; the further it spreads, the greater it grows, till there be no more comparison between its original, and its increase, than there is between the breadth of a man's hand, and the dimensions of the firmament: And who can tell, how mischievous and terrible the end will be?

For the preventing whereof, we should with all possible art and speed, stop the mouths of those who are apt to report such things. In spite of good neighbourhood, and of religion, some will make it their business to lay open the lives of others, to stain their good name, and to spoil the favour of that, which is better than precious ointment.

And what injuries come by this evil practice, not only to particular persons, but to whole societies, is most evident. The least, is that which *Solomon* mentions (tho' that is too great, and sometimes irreparable;) *a whisperer* (says he) *separateth chief friends.*

A good remedy in this case is, to turn the ear aside, and not suffer it to receive any hurtful informations.

If another's sin chance to fall under our eye, we ought to express our charity, by laying a mantle over it with a quick hand; that it may not indanger the rest, by being exposed to publick view.

If the sin be so manifest, that it cannot; or so foul, that it must not be hid;—we ought to express our charity by speaking of it (and that with prudence and kindness also) to the criminal himself, who is the party concerned to repent, and to mend his life for the future.

But after all, instead of discovering other mens faults, it is necessary for every one to look into his own. And if people would but turn their eyes homeward, they would find so much employment for them there, that they would have neither need, nor leisure to look abroad. There is in every breast so much of nature, whatever there be of grace, that our continual care is necessary to keep us right in this matter. Nor is this possible to be done, but by searching narrowly into one's own state. Which if all inquisitive people would do, they could not but discover presently this one great fault of their own; that by prying curiously
after

after others, they have all along overlooked themselves.

THE *Second* property in my text, of the great duty of charity, is this ; That it *believeth* all things ; that is, all things that are good ; and all things that are reasonable for a good man to believe. Credulity, or an easiness of belief, at large, is no virtue ; or, if it be, it is no safe one ; because it is so easy a matter to be deceived ; especially in *men*, who are so liable to deceit ; and because it is sometimes such a woful and calamitous thing to be deceived indeed.

There are many dangers, which religion doth not require us to run into, by trusting without reserve ; and the question may be undeterminable, which of the two is most to be blamed ; he who believes every thing, or he that believes nothing that is told him. On each hand, it is not charity, but folly.

The apostle's meaning therefore is, That in cases which are not plain and clear, beyond just reason of doubtfulness, true christian charity inclines one to believe favourably, and to err rather on the right hand,

by entertaining a kind opinion, even when it is not apparently deserved.

St. *Paul*, who so well understood the operations of virtue, was sensible what good effects this is apt to produce; and how naturally it tendeth to make the minds and lives of people easy; and, on the contrary, how hurtful it is, to the peace and comfort of particular men, and of whole societies, to take up hard conceits, without sufficient and plain grounds; to run away with them, and to act upon them. Hatreds and mischief follow in the end: Witness those outrages which he himself committed, upon his own groundless apprehensions. He believed once, that Christ was a deceiver; and that his disciples were a very dangerous and heretical sect. Upon which false and groundless principle, he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And how fatal and mischievous was that one thought, to the church of Christ? What a world of vexation and misery did it not put them to? And yet all the while, the people he persecuted were innocent; and the persecution was bottomed upon nothing, but

his own unreasonable and wild presumptions.

Thus it is, when men believe without judgment and candour, believe evil things upon evil surmises, and side with wrong notions, as their first imaginations and passions sway them. Havock, and outrage, are the usual consequents. Peace, and a good conscience, and charity, and whatsoever else is desirable, all goes to wrack in the storm.

Now for the increasing in us a spirit of charity, and for the due expressing it as to this point, this general rule must be carefully observed, *To take things always in the best sense*; and never to give way to hard thoughts, where there is room for kind or favourable constructions.

Many times indeed, mens guilt appeareth so foul and open, that the evidence is too strong, for those that are *willing* to doubt in that particular. In which case, charity no more requires us to believe contrary to our experience, than it binds us to discredit the testimony of all our senses. As where people act maliciously every day; in spite of all the charity in the world, we
cannot

cannot but look upon them as very ill men.—But where the matter is doubtful and uncertain, charity should always set it in the fairest light.

We see at best but thro' a *glass* (as it were); a dark and dim prospect; and our sight is much the dimmer, when we would look into mens breasts, where we have no glass at all to look through. Therefore where we are left to guess, our opinion should be on the charitable side, because our eye cannot have a direct stroke upon the principle of another's action. Perhaps it was inadvertency; perhaps it proceeded from ignorance; perhaps from common human frailties. Many excuses charity will help us to find out, before we need to charge it upon the heart.

And this general rule, of putting the best sense upon mens actions, will incline us,—not to be easy in believing the *first* representations. By our daily experience we may find, that the first account of things is commonly the falsest, because it is usually attended with partiality, to possess the minds of people, with a prejudice beforehand.

Some have a sort of itch, both in their

minds and tongues, to speak evil of those they care not for. Upon which account, when an ill thing is offered to our belief, before credit be given to a foul story, we should consider, whether the suggestion may not proceed from an evil heart. Many are apt to take up hard opinions upon trust; which is not only uncharitable, but *unrighteous* too: Because the party is thereby rifled of his reputation at all adventures. If the story be false, the injustice is manifest; if it be but probable, there is probability against it too; if it be altogether uncertain, it is not judgment, but partiality, that governs the belief of it: And after all, if *accusations* be enough, every man must be at mercy for his innocence, tho' his own conscience acquit him.

It is necessary therefore in all ill reports, to suspend one's persuasion till the truth appears; and rather to be for the charitable sense, because to be sure no wrong is done in that case: whereas, judgment is iniquity, when it passeth upon surmise; and he that suffers by the sentence, suffers not for his own, but for another's fault, that is, for another's too quick and rash judgment.

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In short, that charity may make us believe all the good we hear, and hardly any thing but what is good; let it teach our hearts to be in love with *peace*. Reports, whether they be true or false, are *disquieting*; and whatever the first design of them be, the end is quarrel; a mischief that is attended with such a train of ill consequences, that we cannot be too careful, in using our utmost endeavours, to choak the original cause. *Study to be quiet* (saith St. Paul), *and to do your own business*: If mens hearts and hands were thus honestly and wisely employed; it would be a concise, but a very effectual way, of setting their ears and tongues much more at rest.

Thus, Charity *believeth all things*.

THE next property of it in my text is, that it *hopeth all things*. As by the former description, St. Paul shews, how we are to think as to things *present*, or *past*; so by this he directs us, what thoughts we are to entertain as to the *future*. However men be represented, or may appear, we must not despair of them, or give them utterly for gone, as reprobates and castaways, undone

and lost to all eternity. And the reasons of this are taken from the office of charity; which is to do all the good we can in every respect.

To account a man past all recovery, is the ready way to supersede the use of those means, which in ordinary cases are thought fit and proper to bring people to repentance. Charity is a most active and zealous grace, especially when it is concerned about mens souls. No good methods are wanting there, as long as there are hopes.

True charity is apt to use reprovings, reasonings, counsels, warnings, prayers; every thing that the miserable creature needs; and sometimes the greatest pains are little enough, and too little. But all is thought superfluous, and to no purpose, in a case that is judged desperate. All endeavours, as well as hopes, are given over; because none will undertake a task, which he verily believes impossible. It would be all one, as if he should preach or pray over a rock, with a vain design to remove it out of its place.

It is a great discouragement even to a charitable man, to have to do with those, whose

whose spirits and courses are wicked, tho' they make great professions of religion. And their case is the more deplorable, if they trust in themselves that they are righteous, while their hearts and souls are out of frame. Yet an hypocrite may be reclaimed, tho' with much difficulty. The shame of the world, or the gnawings of conscience, or the melancholy circumstances of a sick bed, or the frightful prospect of hell, or some outward extraordinary judgment, may in time bring him to a sense of his sad condition.

Now, as long as there are some, tho' but faint and glimmering hopes, there are some encouragements, such as they be. But for labour, which men think will be certainly and utterly lost, they can find no reason. And this is one great mischief, which comes by uncharitableness of this kind, that it damps the minds and endeavours of men, and violently hinders the carrying on of the cause of the son of God.

To express then our charity aright as to this particular, we should never quite despair of any men, nor give over all endeavours for them, as if their condition were altogether desperate; but use such means,

as are necessary and proper, to bring the most miserable wretches, to a sense of their true state.

For who knoweth, but one time or other, God may give a blessing to our labours? Who knoweth, but peradventure he will give unto such souls repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil?

These are true expressions of charity indeed, to be always on the working hand; to be still upon applying means, upon using endeavours, to let our hearty wishes and prayers accompany our endeavours, and so to leave the success of all to God, and all mankind to God's merciful judgment; hoping and thinking the best we can of them, to the very last.

THE *last* character, which St. Paul gives, in his description of charity, is this; That it *endureth all things*: That is, it teacheth and helps us to be *patient* under all our sufferings. Howsoever we fall into a suffering condition; whether by the particular providence of God, for our trial and correction; or by the rage and power of men;

men; or by some infirmity, or distemper in our nature; or by some outward accident; whensoever, and howsoever, any things happen to us, which are grievous and afflictive, we should endure them; so as becomes men trained up under a suffering Saviour, with temper, and fortitude, and patient continuance in well doing.

Now any one that duly considers, the various injuries which are done, by men of unquiet and stormy tempers, may easily discern, how perfective of charity this virtue is.

Impatient people are not so much as friends to *themselves*. Tho' one would think they were secure of their *own* affections, and their unquietness seems to argue, that they have very little affection for any one else; yet in reality, they are their own most hurtful enemies. Every cross accident puts them upon a fret; and the more active and busy their thoughts are, the greater still is the fermentation. Either pride, or envy, or covetousness, or intemperance, nay many times bare imagination, helps to raise the distemper of the mind to a very high degree. And what comfort
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can there be, in such a one's life, where there is so much uproar?

But if such persons were only injurious to themselves, the matter would not be so bad. *That* wrong they are bound to bear, if they will bear any thing. But the mischief of this vice is, that it loves to be vexatious and hurtful to all about it. It is ready at hand, to avenge the quarrel of every other vice, and to be an executioner in its cause. Hence come malicious designs, uncharitable constructions, opprobrious speeches, revengeful arts, studied oppressions, and most of those wicked and mean things, which are a disgrace to human nature, as well as to religion, and a nuisance to all societies.

The patient man doth not lay and throw about him, after a spiteful manner, or to base ends, or with vile and evil purposes; because there is a principle of true generosity, and a spirit of fortitude and constancy upon which he acteth. This makes his mind great, and sets him much above those odious and low methods, which are plain arguments of a mind that is fordid and degenerate. It is infinitely greater, to bear

a wrong, than to do it. The poorest and most contemptible creature can *annoy*; but it is the *man* only, and the *christian*, that passeth it by, disdaining thereby to be moved out of himself.

In patience possess ye your souls, saith our Saviour. It is a certain way, to be easy in our selves, and to all about us: And this is one great branch of christian charity.

I SHALL conclude all, in those words of St. Paul: *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. Be ye kind to one another, and tender hearted. Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, goodness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.*

S E R M O N XXI.

Preparation for Death.

[From Bishop TAYLOR's Life of Christ, and his Rules and Exercises of holy Dying.]

MATT. XXV. 13.

Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the son of man cometh.

THE holy spirit of God hath in Scripture revealed to us but one way of preparing for death, and that is, by an holy life. This doctrine we are taught in the parable of the ten virgins. Those who were wise, stood waiting for the coming of the bridegroom, their lamps burning; only when the Lord was at hand, at the notice of his coming published, they trimmed their lamps, and went forth to meet him, and entered with him into his interior and eternal joys. They whose lamps did not stand ready, expecting the uncertain hour, were shut forth, and bound in darkness,

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Watch therefore (so our Lord applies and expounds the parable), *for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the son of man cometh.*

And indeed, since all our life we are dying, or as the apostle expresseth it *we die daily*; it is but reasonable that we should always be doing the offices of preparation. If to day we were not dying, and passing on to our grave; then we might with more safety defer our work till the morrow: But as fewel in a furnace, in every degree of its heat and reception of the flame, is converting into fire and ashes, and the disposal of it to its last extinction is the same work with its final dissolution; so is the age of every day a beginning of death, and the night composing us to sleep bids us go to our lesser rest; and whereas we have now died so many days, the last day of our life is but the dying so many more; and when that last day of dying will come, we know not. There is nothing *then* added, but the circumstance of sickness; which also happens many times before. Only men are pleased to call *that* death, which is the end of dying, when we cease to die any more.

more. And therefore to put off our preparation till that which we call death, is to put off the work of all our life, till the time comes in which it is to cease and determine.

But to quicken our endeavours, let it be considered, that no man is sure that he shall not die *suddenly*. And therefore if heaven be worth securing, it is fit that we should reckon every day to be our last; because it may be so, for any thing we know. And let us consider, that those many persons who are remarked in history to have died suddenly, either were happy by an early piety, or miserable by a sudden death. And if uncertainty of condition be an abatement of felicity, and spoils the good we possess; no man can be happy but he that hath lived well, that is, who hath secured his condition by an habitual and *living* piety.

For since God hath not told us we shall not die suddenly, he intended thereby, that we should prepare for *sudden* death, as well as against death clothed in any other circumstances. The stone of a fruit, an hair, a fly, any thing in the world, is able to
kill

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kill a man. As soon as a man is born, that which in nature only remains to him is to die. And if we differ in the way or time of our abode, or the manner of our departure, yet we are equal at last. And since it is not determined by a natural cause, which way we shall go, or at what age; a wise man will suppose himself always upon his death-bed; and such supposition is like, making of his will, he is not the nearer death for doing it, but he is the readier for it when it comes.

His condition is wretched, who will live in that state of life, in which he would not chuse to die. And indeed it is a great venture to be in an evil state of life, because every minute of it hath a danger; and therefore a succession of actions, in every one of which he may as well perish as escape, is a boldness that hath no mixture of wisdom or probable hazard. How many persons have died in the midst of an act of sport, or of an excess of joy? And the number of persons who have been found suddenly dead in their beds is so great, that as it is a motive to us of a more certain and regular devotion, so it would be well if it were

were pursued to the utmost intention of God; that is, that all the parts of religion should with zeal and assiduity be entertained and finished by us, that so, as it becomes wise men, we never be surprized with that which we are sure will some time or other happen. It concerns us to be curious of every particular action; because even in those shorter periods, we may expire and find our graves. And he only is wise, who having made death familiar to him by expectation and daily apprehension, doth at all instants go forth to meet it. The wise virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom, for they were ready. Excellent therefore is the counsel of the son of Sirach: *Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of sins shew repentance. Before judgment examine thy self, and in the day of visitation thou shalt find mercy. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not until death to be justified.*

But altho' our whole life ought to be a constant preparation for death; yet there are certain seasons wherein these considerations ought to have a more particular weight with us, when our dissolution is more nearly

nearly in prospect, as in the time of sickness, or old age.

They who are *old*, ought seriously to consider, that their advantages in that state of life are very few, but their inconveniences are *not* few. Their bodies are then without strength, their prejudices long and mighty, their vices (if they have lived wickedly) are habitual, the occasions of the virtues not many, the possibilities of some (in the matter of which they stand very guilty) are past, and shall never return again, the temptations to them at that time of life being gone; that they have some temptations proper to their age, as peevishness and complaining, covetousness and pride, wilfulness and unwillingness to learn; and they think they are protected by age from beginning to learn anew, or to repent of the old; and they do not leave their vices, but only change them. And after all this, their days are declining apace, as the shadow that goeth down. And therefore, altho' in them, to recover is very possible; yet we may also remember, that in the matter of virtue and repentance, *possibility* is a great way off from performance; and how few

do repent, of whom it is only *possible* that they may ? And that many things more are required to reduce their possibility to act ; a great grace, mighty assistances, great industry, a watchful diligence, a well disposed mind, vehement desires, deep apprehensions of danger, quick perceptions of duty, and time, and God's good blessing and effectual impression and seconding all this, that to will and to do may by him be wrought to great purposes, and with great speed.

And therefore it will not be amiss, but on the contrary it is highly necessary, that these persons, who have lost their time and their blessed opportunities, should have the diligence of youth, and the zeal of new converts, and take account of every hour that is left them, and pray perpetually, and be advised prudently, and study the interest of their souls carefully, with diligence, and with fear ; that their old age, which in effect is nothing but a continual death-bed, dressed with some more order and advantages, may be a state of hope, and labour, and acceptance, thro' the infinite mercies of our blessed Redeemer.

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In like manner, when God vouchsafes to us the warning and opportunities of *sickness*; there are certain exercises of religion which have a special relation to this state, and are therefore of great concernment to be done, that we may make our condition as sure as we can, and our portion of glory greater, and our pardon more compleat, and our love to God more intense; and that our former omissions and breaches may be repaired, in some proportion to those great hopes which we are then going to possess.

Particularly, it behoves the sick person, in the beginning of his sickness, and in every change and great accident of it, to make acts of *resignation* to God, and intirely submit himself to the divine will; remembring, that sickness may, to a man properly disposed, do the work of God, and promote the interest of his soul; as being in it's own nature apt to make us confess our own impotency and dependencies, and to understand our needs of mercy, and the continual influences and supports of heaven; to withdraw our appetites from things below, to correct the vanities and insolencies of our spirits, to remind us of

our state of pilgrimage, and that heaven is our country. For so, sickness is the trial of our patience, a fire to purify us, an instructor to teach us, a bridle to restrain us, and a state inferring great necessities of union with, and adhering unto God.

And this will furnish us with grounds of *patience*. We are to consider in such case, that no temptation hath befallen us, but such as is common to man; that God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it: That whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we thro' patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. We should stand still, and arrest our spirits, and consider, that this is no more than what we looked for, and were always certain should happen, unless God in his displeasure should take us away without any warning; and in no case should we suffer our spirits to be discomposed with fear or wildness of thought, but should stay their looseness and dispersion, by serious consideration of what is present and what is

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to come. We should call in all the auxiliaries of reason, and know that then is the time to try our strength, and the firmness of our principles; and since we must submit to the trial inevitably, we should resolve to do it chearfully; considering withal, that if we behave our selves weakly and timorously, we shall suffer never the less of sickness, and shall bewray a dastardly and unmanly spirit.

And this is the time for the full exercise of our *faith*. It is then that faith appears most necessary, and most difficult. Faith is the foundation of all our hopes; it is that without which we cannot live well, and without which we cannot die well; it is a grace that then we shall need, to support our spirits, to sustain our hopes, to alleviate our sickness, to resist temptations, and to prevent despair. Upon the belief of the articles of our religion, we can do the works of an holy life; and upon the belief of the promises of God, we can bear our sickness patiently, and die chearfully. The sick man's faith therefore should be exercised about the promises of grace, and the excellent things of the gospel; those which

can comfort his sorrows, and enable his patience; those upon the hopes of which he did the duties of his life, and for which he is not unwilling to die; such as the intercession and mediation of Christ, remission of sins, the resurrection, the mysterious arts and mercies of man's redemption, Christ's triumph over death and all the powers of hell, the covenant of grace, or the blessed issues of repentance; and above all, the article of eternal life and happiness in the other world.

And when the sick person is thus disposed, let him begin to dress his lamp with the repetition of acts of *repentance*; perpetually praying to God for pardon of his sins, representing to himself the horror of them, the multitude, the aggravations; being helped by arguments to excite contrition, and by repetition of holy prayers and resolutions. And he may, by accepting and humbly receiving his sickness at God's hand, transmit it into the condition of an act or effect of repentance; acknowledging himself by sin to have deserved and procured it, and praying that the punishment of his crimes may be here, and not reserved

reserved for the state of separation, and for ever.

And let him inquire particularly into the repentance of his former life; whether it was of a great and perfect grief, and productive of fixed resolutions of holy living, and effectual in reducing them to practice; how many days and nights we have spent in sorrow and care, in habitual and actual pursuances of virtue; what means we have chosen and used for the rooting out of sin; how we have judged our selves, to prevent our being judged of the Lord; whether we have, by the grace of repentance, changed our life, from criminal to virtuous, and from one virtuous habit to another.

And we should supply the imperfections of our repentance, by a general or universal sorrow for the sins of our whole lives; for all sins known and unknown, repented and unrepented of, of ignorance or infirmity, of openness or secrecy.

And we should be watchful and diligent, that the principle of our repentance be a sorrow for our sins, commenced not upon the grounds of a slavish and abject fear, but of the love of God, gracious and mer-

ciful and of great goodness. To which purpose we should consider, that there are in God all the motives and causes of amiability in the world: That God is so infinitely good, that there are some of the greatest and most excellent spirits of heaven, whose work and whose felicity, and whose perfections, and whose nature it is, to shine forth in the brightest and most excellent love: That to love God is the greatest glory of heaven: That in him there are such excellencies, that the smallest rays of them, communicated to our weaker understandings, are sufficient to cause transports and satisfactions, and joys unspeakable and full of glory: That all the wise christians of the world know and feel such causes to love God, that they all profess themselves ready to die for the love of God: And the apostles, and numberless martyrs, did die for him: That all those good persons that have ever been followers of Christ, did for his love endure the crucifying their sins, the mortification of their appetites, the contradictions and death of their most violent and natural desires: That all the good we have, is derived from God's love to us; and all
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the good we can hope for, is the effect of his love, and can descend only upon them that love him : That by his love it is, that we receive the holy Jesus ; and by his love we receive the blessed spirit ; and by his love we feel peace and joy within our selves ; and by his love we receive the mysterious sacrament of Christ's body and blood. And what can be greater, than that from the goodness and love of God, we receive Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and the adoption and inheritance of sons, and to be co-heirs with Christ, and to have pardon of our sins, and a divine nature, and restraining grace, and the grace of sanctification, and rest and peace within us, and a certain expectation of glory ? Who can chuse but love him, who, when we had provoked him exceedingly, sent his son to die for us, that we might live with him ; who doth so desire to pardon and save us, that he hath appointed his only son continually to intercede for us ? That his love is so great, that he offers us great kindness, and intreats us to be happy, and makes many decrees in heaven concerning the interest of our souls, and the very provision
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for and support of our persons: That he sends his angels to attend upon his servants, and to be their guard and their guide in all their dangers and distresses: That he it is, that makes all the creatures serve us; and takes care of our sleeps; and preserves all plants and elements, all minerals and vegetables, all beasts and birds, all fishes and insects, for food to us and for ornament, for physick and instruction, for variety and wonder, for delight and for religion: That as God is all good in himself, and all good to us; so *sin* is directly contrary to God, to reason, to religion, to safety, and pleasure, and felicity.

And now is the time particularly, beyond which the sick man must by no means defer to make *restitution* of all his unjust possessions, or other mens rights; and satisfactions for all injuries and violences, according to his obligation and possibilities. Above all single acts of this exercise, we are concerned to see, that nothing of other mens goods stick to us; but let us shake it off, as we would a burning coal from our flesh; for it will destroy us, it will carry a curse with us, and leave a curse behind us.

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Those who by our means or importunity have become vicious, we must exhort to repentance and an holy life; those whom we have cheated into crimes, we must restore to a right understanding; those who are by violence or interest led captive by us to any indecency, we must restore to their liberty, and encourage to the prosecution of holiness. We must discover and confess our fraud and unlawful arts, cease our violence, and give as many advantages to virtue as we have done to viciousness. We must make recompence for such wrongs as we cannot repair in kind; and restore every man (as much as we can) to that good condition from which we have removed him; restore his fame, so far as it is in our power; give back his goods, and take off all unjust invasions of his estate; pay debts; satisfy for our fraud and injustice, as far as we can, and as soon. Otherwise this alone is weight enough to sink us into perdition.

And having thus disposed himself, let the sick man be *reconciled* to all those, in whom he knows or suspects any degrees of anger, or malice, or displeasure towards him; submitting himself to those with
humility,

humility, whom he unworthily hath displeased; and offering pardon to those that have displeased him.

And after these preparatives, he may with piety and confidence resign his soul into the hands of God, to be deposited in holy receptacles till the day of the restitution of all things; and in the mean time, with a quiet spirit, descend into that state which is the lot of all men, where kings and conquerors have laid aside their glories.

It only remains, that we who are yet in health, and have space and opportunity before us, should so live, and by the actions of religion attend the coming of the day of the Lord, that we neither be surprized, nor leave our duties imperfect, nor our sins uncanceled, nor our persons unreconciled, nor God unappeased: but that when we descend to our graves, we may rest in the bosom of the Lord, till the mansions be prepared, where we shall triumph and rejoice eternally.

S E R M O N XXII.

The Scripture evidence of a future judgment.

[From SHERLOCK on Judgment.]

HEB. IX. 27.

— *After this, the judgment.*

THE apostle, having observed that *it is appointed unto men once to die,* directs our thoughts to what will be the consequence of death, — *after death, the judgment.* And a very grave and serious consideration it is, if any thing will make men serious; for nothing can be of greater concernment to us than a future judgment; which will determine our final state and condition to eternity.

The *evidences* of a future judgment are deduced, either from *reason*, or from *revelation*. By our natural *reason* we can prove, that God will judge the world, as that signifies, that God will call all men to an account

count for their actions, and that he will reward good men, and punish the wicked, in the next world. This the heathens themselves discovered by the light of nature. They talked very much of the infernal judges, and of the rewards and punishments of good and bad men after death; and therefore in this sense did believe a future judgment.—But yet, the *revelation* of the gospel has given us a more plain and undeniable assurance of this, and has discovered something more than the light of nature could discover. The light of nature and reason may satisfy us, as it did the heathens, that God will reward good men, and punish the wicked, in the next world; but it could not tell us, that God had appointed a general day of judgment, wherein all the dead shall rise again out of their graves, and re-assume their bodies, and be summoned to judgment. It could not tell us, who shall be our judge; with what glory and majesty he shall appear; and with what pomp, and awful solemnity, he shall judge us. The world knew nothing of this, before the gospel was preached; for it depends wholly upon the will
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and pleasure of God, and therefore can be known only by revelation.

I propose therefore to consider in this discourse, the *scripture* evidences of this great doctrine. And this indeed might be dispatched in very few words, by referring you to some *plain texts of Scripture*, which expressly assert it; but I shall do something more than this, which, if it be not necessary for the proof of a future judgment, yet will be of use for the better understanding the christian religion, and to rivet this belief faster in our minds; that is, I shall represent to you those *parabolical reasonings* whereby our Saviour insinuates this belief into our minds; and shew you, that the *whole christian religion is founded on, and adapted to the belief of a future judgment*, and would be a very unintelligible institution without it.

I BEGIN with those *plain and express proofs*, which the gospel of our Saviour contains, of a future judgment. And some few texts will be sufficient for this purpose.

This is expressly affirmed by St. Paul, Acts xvii. 31. *That God hath appointed a day*

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in the which he will judge the world in righte-
ousness.

Our Saviour tells us that we shall be judged, Matt. vii. 1, 2. *Judge not, that ye be not judged: For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again.*

And, in the same chapter, v. 22, 23. he says, that *in that day* (that is the day of judgment) *many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Thus he tells us, Matt. xvi. 27. *The son of man shall come, in the glory of his father, with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works.*

And, in Matt. xxv. 31, &c. he gives a lively description of the future judgment: *When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd*

shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. And then he judges them, and pronounces their final doom and sentence according to their works (as it follows in that place.)

It would be easy to produce many other texts of Scripture to this purpose, as every one knows, who is acquainted with the Scripture : But there is no need of it. These few are so express, that if we believe the gospel, we must believe that we shall be judged.

I PROCEED therefore to the next thing I propos'd, which was, to consider, that our Saviour doth not only expressly declare this, that there shall be a judgment, but insinuates the belief and reasonableness of it by some proper allusions and comparisons; which is the true scope and design of many of his PARABLES.

As to instance in some of them : In the 19th chapter of St. *Luke*, he tells us of a certain nobleman, who went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return; where he describes his own leaving this world, and ascending into

heaven, to take possession of his kingdom; from whence he shall return again, at the last day, to judge the world. This nobleman *called his servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.* This describes our state in this world, which is a state of labour and industry, where we must improve our master's money, to wit, all the advantages and opportunities of doing good, to his service and glory. Now, as it is reasonable to expect, when such a king returns, that he will call his servants to an account, reward the diligent, and punish the slothful, and destroy his enemies; the same usage we must expect from our Lord, when he returns again. He will judge us, will reward or punish us, according to our works.

To the same purpose is that parable, *Matt. xxv. of a man travelling into a far country; who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods; and at his return rewarded them proportionably to the increase and improvement they had made, and punished*

punished that wicked servant who hid his talent, and made no improvement of it.

The parable of the *unjust steward*, Luk. xvi. who had wasted his master's goods, and was turned out of his stewardship for it, is founded on the same reason; that we are but stewards of God's gifts in this world, and that God will as certainly call us to an account for our stewardship, as an earthly master will.

The parable of the *householder* (Matt. xx.) *who hired labourers into his vineyard*, and gave them every man a penny at night; signifies to us, that in this life we must work in God's vineyard, and finish the work he has given us to do; and that at evening, when this life ends, God will reward us in the next; and this we may as certainly and reasonably expect from God, as an hired labourer expects his wages when he has done his work.

The parable of the *king*, Matt. xxii. *who made a marriage for his son*, and sent forth his servants to call them who were bidden to the wedding, but they refused to come, and evil intreated his servants, and slew them, upon which the king was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed

those murderers, and burnt up their city, and sent and invited others to the marriage;—tho' it primarily refer to the destruction of the jewish nation, for their rejecting the Messias, and calling the gentiles into the church,—yet is founded on the same reason, that God will punish our abuse of his grace, and of all the invitations of the gospel, as a gracious, but affronted prince would punish his subjects in such a case.

But more especially, the parable of the *wheat and tares*, Matt. xiii. is very observable, because it gives an account why God doth not destroy all bad men in this world, and yet that he will punish the wicked, and reward the good, in the next world: *A man sowed good seed in his field, and while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares; but when the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.* This our Saviour expounds thus: *He that sowed good seed*, is the son of man; the *field*, is the world; the *good seed*, are the children of the kingdom (that is, good christians); but the *tares*, are the children of the wicked one (that is, bad men). The *enemy* that sowed them, is the devil.—The servants

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servants of the householder, having informed their master of what had happened, ask him, Whether they should go and gather up the tares? *But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them: Let them both grow together till the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.* Which he thus expounds: The *harvest* is the end of the world; and the *reapers* are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their father. —This, we must confess, was wisely considered by the householder; not to destroy the wheat with the tares; but rather suffer them both to grow up together till the harvest, than to pluck up the wheat before it

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should

should be ripe, together with the tares. And this is as good a reason, why God doth not destroy all bad men in this world; because good and bad men are intermixed, and all bad men cannot be destroyed here, but good men must suffer with them.—But the tares must not expect to escape thus always. A wise householder, in the time of harvest, will order the reapers to separate between the tares and the wheat; and then the tares shall be burnt, and the wheat gathered into the barn. And thus Christ will separate between good and bad men at the last judgment, and allot them very different portions. All this is very reasonable; thus a wise man will do; and therefore this we must expect, from the wise and just judge of the world.

Thus we see in these parables, that our Saviour doth not only prove that God will judge the world, but convinceth us of the necessity and reasonableness of this, by appealing to the common rules of prudence and justice among men: Thus, all wise and just princes and householders will do; destroy traitors and rebels; revenge the abuse of their favours; call their stewards to an account; reward the labour and improve-
ments

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ments of faithful servants, and punish the slothful and unprofitable; separate the wheat and tares at harvest, tho' they grow up together in the same field: And therefore thus God will do, who is not less wise, and just, and holy than men are. And this gives authority to all the arguments for a future judgment, drawn from the reason and nature of things; thus our Saviour reasons, and thus he hath taught us to reason. For the fundamental principle, on which all these parables rest, is this; that whatever is manifestly just, and wise, and reasonable for men to do, that God will do and much more.

I PROCEED now, further, in the next place to shew, as I proposed, that *the whole christian religion is founded on, and adapted to the belief of a future judgment*, and would be a very unintelligible institution without it; and therefore this must be a first principle to all who call themselves christians, if they understand the religion they profess. As to shew this particularly:

The chief *promises* and *threatnings* of the gospel, relate to the other world. Godliness, indeed, hath the promise of the life

that now is, as well as that which is to come; but the temporal promises made to an holy and virtuous life, are such as worldly minded men cannot much value. They extend no farther than food and raiment, therewith to be content. But who could be contented with such a scanty provision, while he sees the greater prosperity of bad men, who dissolve in ease and luxury, were there not an happy state reserved for them in the next world? Where is the man, who would not comply with the devil's temptation to fall down and worship him, for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, were he not to lose a brighter and a richer crown for it?

Sometimes, indeed, God doth bless good men with great plenty and honour; but he has no where *promised* to do so in the gospel of Christ. Sometimes he doth it, not so much to reward good men (for temporal things are not the proper rewards of piety and virtue), as to serve the ends of his providence in the world. He takes care of good men, to supply their wants and necessities here, which is all that a perfect virtue requires; but he *rewards* them here-
after :

after: And yet this is not absolutely promised neither; for our Saviour teacheth us, to take up his cross, to expect sufferings and persecutions for his name's sake; and then we must be contented to want food and raiment, to part with houses and lands, and life itself for his sake; and our condition may be so afflicted and calamitous here, that it may force us to say, as St. Paul doth, *If in this life only we had hope, we should be of all men the most miserable.* And who would be the disciple of Christ upon these terms; to suffer so much for him in this world, and to gain nothing by it in the next?

Thus, on the other hand, there is a terrible *vengeance threatned* against wicked men in the next world; *lakes of fire and brimstone; blackness of darkness; the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out.* But the gospel doth not generally threaten *temporal* punishments against sin. Bad men, it is true, are very often punished in this world, when the wisdom of the divine providence sees fit; but they often escape too, and are sometimes more prosperous than good men are here. And there
is

is no effectual threatening in the gospel, to restrain the impieties of men, but only the fears of the other world, and a future judgment; and if we take away these, we destroy the gospel of our Saviour.

And, further, we may observe, that *many of our Saviour's laws are founded on this same supposition of a future judgment*; and would be extremely unreasonable, if there were no rewards or punishments after this life. So that if we will but allow to him the ordinary prudence of a lawgiver, a future judgment must be the foundation of his religion.

If there were no other life after this, the only rules of our actions would be, to live as long, and to enjoy as much of this world as we can. But the christian religion in many cases will not allow of this; and therefore is no religion for this world, were there not another world to follow.

Particularly, as to the *enjoyments* of this world: How many restraints doth the christian religion lay on us, to lessen the pleasures and satisfactions of this life? It teacheth us a great indifferency to all things of this world: But how unreasonable would that

that be, if this world were our only place of happiness? For who can be indifferent, whether he be happy or not? It commands us to mortify our sensual appetites; to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; to live above the pleasures of the body; to pluck out our right eyes (if they offend, or draw us into sin), and cut off our right hands: But what reason can there be, to deny our selves any of these enjoyments, if we have no expectation after death?

It forbids us to lay up for our selves treasures on earth; which would be a strange command, were there not greater treasures to be expected in heaven. It forbids earthly pride and ambition, an affectation of secular honours and power: But why must we submit to meanness and contempt in this world, if this be the only scene of action we shall ever be concerned in? For a mean and base spirit is no virtue; and, for the same reason, it can be no virtue to be contented with a low fortune, to be patient under sufferings, which if they will never be rewarded, is to be patiently miserable, and that is stupidity and folly. And to have our conversation in heaven, to live
upon

upon the hopes of unseen things, would be madness and distraction, if there were no heaven, and no unseen things to be hoped for.

The laws of our Saviour require us, in some cases, to sacrifice the dearest interests we have in this world, and life it self, for his sake; which would be a senseless and unreasonable command, if he did not intend to bestow a better life on us. If there were no other life after this; no wise man would forfeit more for any religion, than it is worth in this world, and that would but reach a little way in suffering. Nor is our Saviour so unreasonable, as to require it upon these terms; but tells us plainly, *Whosoever (says he) will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it: For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*—The reasons of most of the gospel commands must be fetched wholly from the other world, and a future judgment; so that altho' no such express mention had been made of a judgment to come, we should have had the same evidence

evidence for it, that we have for the christian religion it self.

HAVING thus shewn the Scripture evidence of a future judgment, let us be persuaded from hence, to improve this belief for the government of our lives; for that is the only end of faith and knowledge.

Let us therefore endeavour to live as it becomes those who shall certainly be judged.

Let all our actions be conducted *with great consideration and advice*. Rashness and inadvertency, to do we know not what, in a heat and hurry, without considering whether it be good or evil, right or wrong; doth not become those who must be judged. To be judged, is to be called to an account, to give a reason for what we do; and therefore we ought to consider, what reason to give, before we do it. It will be an ill plea at the day of judgment to say, that we did not consider what we did; that we lived without care, without thought, and without observation. For this is no allowable plea for any reasonable creature; much less, for one who knows he must be judged.

And as we ought to act with *consideration*, so we must make it the standing principle
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and rule of our lives, *never to do any thing, but what we can give a good account of; either what we know is our duty, or at least what we are satisfied is very lawful and innocent to be done.* For if we do those things which we cannot account for, for which our own minds condemn us; how can we appear with any hope and confidence at the tribunal of God?

Lastly, It becomes those who must be judged, to *judge themselves*, and to take a frequent and impartial account of their own lives and actions. The truth is, it is impossible for any man, who knows he shall be judged, not to be very solicitous to know, what his judgment shall be. And this every man may in a great measure know, who impartially examines his own conscience. For so St. John tells us: *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; but if our heart, (that is, our conscience well informed) condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

This frequent examination of our selves, would keep a perpetual watch and guard upon our lives. After our greatest care and caution, a great many things will be
hastily

hastily done, and said, which we cannot reconcile with the rules of prudence, and decency, and strict virtue. But he who frequently calls himself to an account, and observes all these defects, will attain an habitual caution and watchfulness, and improve into great exactness of conversation, and all the graces and beauties of virtue.

It is a very good rule, to call our selves to an account every night, for what we have done that day. This would make us reverence ourselves, and our own consciences. But there is much more reason to do so, when we remember, that *God* observes all our actions, and will judge us for them, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

S E R M O N XXIII.

That the dead, small and great,
must be judged.

[From SHERLOCK's Discourse on Judgment.]

R E V. XX. 12.

I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.

TH E S E words are spoken of the general judgment at the last day. And lest some persons might think themselves exempt from this judgment, namely, as being either too *high* to be called to an account, or, on the other hand, too *low* to be taken notice of; the author of my text includes both these specially, in his prophetic vision of the last judgment: *I saw the dead, SMALL and GREAT, stand before God.*

And the *general* declarations of the Scriptures are, that *all* shall be judged. We are all alike God's creatures; we are all equally accountable

accountable to him ; and tho' we have very different talents, yet we have all some talent or other to improve for our master's use. But because these two sorts of persons I have mentioned are too apt to forget this, altho' they have as much occasion to think of a judgment as any other persons ; I shall endeavour in this discourse to remind them of it.

FIRST, as to the *Rich and Great*. These must all be judged, how little soever they think of it, as well as the meanest men. It is true, great power and great riches make them revered and adored like so many deities in *this* world ; and they are willing to think of nothing further. All men court and flatter them, and make a great distinction between them and those of a meaner rank and fortune ; and this is apt to swell their minds. They look down upon the rest of the world, as very much below them ; and think they merit much, whenever they look up to God. For such great men as they are, to worship God, and lift up their eyes sometimes to heaven, they imagine is so great an honour to God,

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and credit to religion, that a very little matter will be accepted from them. They see human judicatures oftentimes have great respect for men's persons in judgment, and they hope God will consider their quality too, and deal with them like princes, or nobles, or gentlemen. So that if these men believe they shall be judged, yet they persuade themselves that they shall not be judged like other men; that God will wink at their faults, and have respect to their rank and quality, and excuse them from the strict observation of those laws which were made for meaner persons.

I suppose you do not expect I should gravely and seriously confute such vain conceits as these, which few men dare profess, and own, and defend, tho' they secretly flatter themselves with such hopes, as is too visible in their lives: But since men are apt to think such things as they dare not speak, it will be useful to suggest some wiser thoughts to them, which may prevent such imaginations, and bring the greatest men living under the awe and terror of the future judgment.

For

For what a vain imagination is it, that God will have regard to earthly greatness in judging the world! For what is this world, and all the greatness and glory of it, to him who made it? Great and small are but comparative terms; and nothing is great, when compared with that which is greater. Consider the glory of our judge, when he shall come attended with myriads of angels; and then think what little creeping worms we are to him.

We may observe in this world, that every rank and degree of men appears considerable to those below them; but those above use them as inferiors, and are not afraid to judge and correct them for their faults. And is there not a much greater distance between God and the greatest emperor, than there is between the greatest emperor and one of his meanest subjects?

And since man is apt to boast of his power and greatness; let him consider, who it is that made him so, who it is that made him to differ from the meanest beggar. Who is it that advances princes to the throne, and cloaths them with glory and majesty? Is not all power of God?

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Are they not his ministers and servants?
And are not all servants accountable to
their master? And the greater their trust
and power is, have they not a greater ac-
count to give? And is this a reason why
they should give none, why they should be
exempted from judgment, and from giving
an account?

But it is a wonderful thing to think of,
that any man should glory in power and
greatness, or imagine himself too big to be
judged by God, or that God will have any
regard to his greatness in judging him;
for did he but reflect upon his own state
and condition in this world, it would con-
vince him what a little inconsiderable crea-
ture he is,

As great as any man is, he is exposed
to every accident, to all changes and vi-
cissitudes of fortune. God can, and very
often does, punish him in this world; and
then there is no reason to expect that he
will not judge him in the next. Pain and
sickness stand in no awe of his greatness;
and death is no more afraid of him than of
a beggar. Those who are revered like
gods upon earth, must die like men; and
this

this puts an end to all their greatness. For after a little funeral pomp is over, and they are laid in their graves with a little more ceremony than meaner men, they are forsaken of all their guards, and retinue, and dependants, and are left to be a prey for worms. And is this the creature too great to reverence and worship God, and too big to be judged; whom worms eat, and beggars walk over his grave!

This is the weak and frail state of the greatest men on earth. They go naked and unarmed into another world, stript of their power and fortunes, of riches and honours, which dazzled the eyes of men here, and when they are gone, all men speak their minds freely of them, judge their lives and actions, arraign their memories, and revenge their injuries upon their graves. And when they are become little enough to be judged by men, surely they are not too big for God's judgment. *Then the kings of the earth* (as the author of my text expresseth it*) *and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, as well as every*

* Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17.

390 *That the dead, small and great, bondman, and every freeman, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the rocks and mountains, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

Let them consider this, all that are rich and great; who are so apt to forget God, and a future judgment. Riches profit not in the day of wrath. They cannot bribe God, as they do men. No power can prevail against the almighty. Proud and swelling titles are mere empty bubbles, which burst and vanish into nothing in the next world. Men they are, and they must die like men, and shall be judged like men, and have much more reason to think of judgment than other men have, for they have a greater account to give, and are in more danger of giving a very bad account, if they do not frequently and seriously think of judgment.

What a mighty trust, and a mighty temptation, are riches, and honour, and power! How much good, and how much hurt,

may such men do in the world ! And what a formidable thing is it, to give an account of all the good, that we might and ought to have done, and have not ; and of all the evil we have done, by the abuse of those blessings of heaven, which we were intrusted with to do good.

Honour and power always carry some great duties with them ; they are not merely intended to set some men above others, and to command outward reverence ; but they are for the good order and government of the world, to suppress and punish wickedness, and to protect and encourage innocence and virtue. Such men are like the great luminaries of heaven, to direct and cherish the world with their light and influence.

The like may be said of riches ; which is but a stewardship, and we must give an account of it.

Unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required. Our account increases, as our riches, and honour, and power does. For the more opportunities we have of doing good, the more is expected from us. And the more we have experienced the

divine bounty and goodness, the greater returns we owe of duty and gratitude. And therefore rich, and great, and powerful men, have more reason to think of judgment, than other men, because they have a greater account to give ; and nothing but the frequent and serious thoughts of judgment, will enable them to make a *good* account.

I PROCEED now to the other sort of persons I mentioned ; namely, those who are *poor* and *calamitous*. These also are very apt to forget a future judgment, or think themselves unconcerned in it. They are too little, they think, for judgment ; as the others were too great. What should God judge them for, whom he has intrusted with little or nothing ; who can spare no time to worship God, for all the time they have is little enough to get bread in ; who cannot be blamed (they think), if when they can get a little drink, they drink away sorrow, and forget their wants and miseries for some few moments ; or if they pilfer and steal or lye to get bread, necessity has no law, and makes such actions innocent (they

(they hope) in them, as are great crimes in other men.

By such kind of excuses as these, poor men excuse away all concernment about religion; religion is above them; rich and happy people may be at leisure for it, but they have enough to do to live. And thus it is proportionably in less degrees of poverty. Every condition of life which may be called poor, is apt to tempt men to be careless of religion, and unmindful of a future judgment.

Now what is to be said to these men? Shall we prove that poor men shall be judged as well as rich? It would be impertinent even to attempt it. For if all mankind are to be judged, the poor must be judged too, if they be men.

Are not poor men able to give an account of their actions, and why then should they not be called to an account for them? Are they not reasonable creatures, and able to understand, and give a reason for what they do? And why then should not God ask a reason of them? If they have nothing to give an account of, no account shall be demanded; but if they have, why should they

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they not give an account of what they have, be it more or less? Poor men shall give no account of riches, because they have them not; but this does not hinder, but that they may give an account of their poverty, and of those graces which become a poor and low fortune.

They shall not be examined about their charity, when they had nothing to give; but they may for their thankfulness to God, and to their benefactors. They shall not be examined, how they used their riches, which they had not; but they may be, how they bore their poverty; whether external poverty has taught them true poverty of spirit, humility, modesty, patience in want and sufferings, contentment with a little, submission to the will of God, and a cheerful dependence on providence for their daily bread; whether they have constantly prayed to God for the supply of their wants, as well as implored the help and assistance of the rich: These are duties and virtues which poverty teaches, and which poor men ought to exercise, and therefore which God may challenge from them, and judge them for.

It

It is a very wild imagination, to think that poverty will excuse mens *pride*, and *rudeness*, and *insolence*; unless it be a virtue to be proud, when men have no temptation to it, and have nothing to be proud of.

Will poverty excuse *sloth* and *idleness*? When men have nothing to live by but their hands, is that a reason why they should not work? When men are able to work, and get their own living; is poverty an excuse for begging and living idly, upon the charity and industry of other men?

But above all things, poverty is the most unreasonable and senseless excuse for *irreligion*, for *neglecting the worship of God*. For certainly, if any thing will make us sensible, how much we stand in need of God, poverty will. Rich men, whose coffers are full of treasure, who have goods laid up for many years, are apt to forget God, because they think they have no present need of him. They have no occasion (they think) to beg their daily bread of him, who have enough to last their lives, and to maintain their posterity in luxury, when they are gone. But methinks poor men, who
have

have no provisions beforehand, and know not where they shall have their bread the next day, should be very sensible that they live upon providence, and have nothing else to trust to. And would not any one reasonably expect, that such men would be very devout worshippers of God, would pray constantly and heartily to him, to take them into his care, when they have nothing but the providence of God to depend on. One would think such men should above all things take care to please God, and to make him their friend and patron; for if he cast them off, they have no other refuge. That is a profane irreligious mind indeed, whom want and distress will not drive to God.

So that, you see, religion is the business, and ought to be the care of poor men as well as of the rich. There are graces and virtues for them to exercise, proper for their state of life. And therefore they shall be judged as well as the rich, and ought frequently to think of a future judgment, and to live under the constant awe and sense of it.

The constant sense of a future judgment is indeed very necessary for all mankind, to govern

govern their lives, and to prepare their accounts; but besides this, it is of the greatest use to poor men of any other; for it will in a great measure help to cure their poverty, or to make it easy.

In ordinary cases, a man who lives under a constant sense of judgment, cannot be poor to extremity. For the sense of judgment will make him diligent, and industrious, and honest, and frugal, and temperate, and a devout worshipper of God; which are all thriving virtues, and will not suffer a man to be miserably poor. The diligent hand maketh rich; and when it doth not make rich, it at least prevents poverty. Inflexible honesty gives a man reputation in the world, brings him into business and employment, and that is a way to thrive. Frugality and temperance save what is got, and increase the store. And reverence and devotion for God brings down blessings on them, and gives success to their honest labours; and we know it is the blessing of God which maketh rich.

The experience of the world, as well as the reason of the thing, proves this. The miserable poor are generally the most corrupt

rupt and profligate part of mankind, the very reproach of human nature. And if we make any curious observations about it, we shall generally find, that it is not their poverty which makes them wicked, but their wickedness makes them poor. You shall very rarely see an honest, industrious, sober, pious man, but makes a very good shift to live comfortably in the world, unless the times prove very hard indeed. And in this case such industrious poor seldom want friends. For every one who knows them, is ready to help them. And therefore poor men ought to think of a future judgment, not only to save their souls, but to teach them to live in the world, to deliver them from the extreme pressures of want. And this is a double obligation upon poor persons to think frequently of a future judgment, that it is necessary to provide a comfortable subsistence for them in this world, and to save their souls in the next.

But whether this remove their poverty or no, it will support them under it, and make them patient and contented with their portion here. If they govern their lives under the sense of a future judgment, it will

will support them under the meanness and calamities of their present fortune, with better hopes. They will then contemplate *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* bosom, and comfort themselves with the change of their condition, as soon as they remove into the other world. There they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Their wants and sufferings in this world, if they bear them well, shall be greatly rewarded; and tho' they grovel in the dust here, they shall then shine forth like the sun, in the kingdom of their father. It is a miserable condition indeed, to remove from a dunghill to hell; but a dunghill is a palace, if it will advance us to heaven. Nothing but these things can make extreme poverty tolerable; but such hopes as these will make the poorest man rich and happy.

WHEREFORE, let us all, both rich and poor, mind the business of religion; as being that, which will render our condition happy or miserable to all eternity. Since we must all be judged, let us live in constant expectation of it. And this is the conclusion which *Solomon* made, after a long
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and exact inquiry into the actions of men,
and of all things that are done under the
sun: *Let us hear the conclusion, says he, of
the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his
commandments, for this is the whole of man.
For God will bring every work into judgment,
with every secret thing, whether it be good,
or whether it be evil.*

S E R M O N XXIV.

Of Religious Persecution.

[From Bishop TAYLOR's Liberty of Propheying.]

LUKE IX. 54, 55, 56.

Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: For the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.

THE occasion of these words, naturally conducts our thoughts to the consideration of that important inquiry, how far men are to be persecuted upon account of their religious principles or persuasions.

It is well known, that the Jews and Samaritans were at utter variance in respect to their religion; insomuch that they would

have no kind of dealings or conversation one with the other. And we read in this chapter, that our Saviour setting himself as if he would go to Jerusalem, sent messengers before him; who went, and entred into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

But the Samaritans, in zeal to their profession, would not receive him; because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, in the true vindictive spirit of prejudice and opposition, they said unto our Lord, *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

But our Lord, whose doctrine and institution was of the direct contrary influence and tendency, *turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: For the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.* And no other resentment was shewed upon this occasion; but they *turned away, and went unto another village:* Exhibiting herein to us a great example, of the demeanor to be used

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used by us towards persons differing from us in speculative opinions.

Now in order to treat more clearly and explicitly upon this subject, I first of all lay down this proposition and distinction: That *no christian ought to be put to death, or otherwise directly persecuted for his opinion, which doth not teach wickedness or impiety.* If it plainly and apparently brings in a crime, and he himself doth act it, or encourage it; then the matter of fact is punishable, according to its proportion or malignity. As, if he preaches treason or sedition; his opinion is not his excuse, because it introduceth a crime. A man is nevertheless a traitor, for believing it lawful to commit treason; and a man is a murderer if he kills his brother unjustly, altho' he thinks he doth God good service in it. Matters of fact are equally judicable, whether the principle of them be from within or from without. And if a man could pretend to innocence, in being seditious, blasphemous, or perjured, by persuading himself that it is lawful; there would be as great a gate opened to all iniquity, as would entertain

all the pretences, the designs, the impostures, and disguises of the world.

And therefore God hath taken order, that all rules concerning matters of fact and good life shall be so clearly set forth, that without the crime of the man, he cannot be ignorant of all his practical duty. And therefore the apostles and primitive teachers made no scruple of condemning such persons for hereticks, as did patronize a sin. He that teacheth others to sin, is worse than he that commits the crime; as much worse, as the mischief is more universal, or as a fountain is greater than a drop of water taken from it.

He that writes treason, or preaches sedition, and persuades it to the people, is the greatest traytor and incendiary; and his opinion in that respect is the fountain of a sin, and therefore could not be entertained in his understanding upon weakness, or innocent prejudice. He cannot, from Scripture or divine revelation, have any pretence, to colour that so fairly, as to seduce either a wise or an honest man.

If it rests in the mind, and goes no further; it is not cognizable by human judicature:

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ture: But if it be published, and comes from the thought into action; then it becomes matter of fact in principle and in persuasion, and is just so punishable, as is the crime that it persuades. Such were they, of whom St. Paul * complains, who brought in damnable doctrines and heresies; and his wishing them to be cut off, is just concerning them, take it in any sense of rigour and severity, so it be proportionable to the crime, or criminal doctrine. Such were those of whom God spake in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy: *If any prophet tempts to idolatry saying, Let us go after other Gods, he shall be slain.* But these do not come into this question. But the proposition is to be understood, concerning questions disputable in the matter of understanding; which also, notwithstanding that law of Moses, such false prophets were permitted to entertain; as appears beyond exception, in the great divisions and disputes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

It is not denied, but that certain and known idolatry, or any other sort of *practi-*

* Gal. v. 12.

*cal*impiety, together with the doctrine on which it is founded, may be punished corporally; because it is no other but matter of fact: But no matter of mere opinion, no errors that of themselves are not sins, are to be prosecuted or punished by death or corporal inflictions.

And this I propose to make appear from the several considerations following.

FIRST, It is *easy for us in such matters to be deceived*. So long as the christian religion was a plain profession of the articles of belief, and a hearty prosecution of the rules of good life; the fewness of the articles, and the clearness of the rule, were the cause of seldom erring. But when divinity is swelled up to so great a body, when the several questions which the peevishness and wantonness of seventeen ages have commenced are brought together, and from all these questions something is drawn into the common mass; it is impossible for any industry to consider so many particulars, in the infinite numbers of questions, as are necessary to be considered, before we can with certainty determine any. And after

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all the considerations which we can have in a whole age, we are not sure *not to be deceived*. The obscurity of some questions, the nicety of some articles, the intricacy of some revelations, the variety of human understandings, the windings of logick, the tricks of adversaries, the subtilty of sophisters, the engagement of educations, personal affections, the portentous number of writers, the infinity of authorities, the vastness of some arguments (as consisting in the enumeration of many particulars), the uncertainty of others, the several degrees of probability, the difficulties of Scripture, the invalidity of the proofs of tradition, the opposition of all exterior arguments to each other, and their open contestation, the publick violence done to authors and records, the private arts and supplantings, the satisfiyings, the indefatigable industry of some men to abuse all understandings and all persuasions into their own opinions; these, and thousands more, even all the difficulty of things, and all the weakneses of man, and all the arts of the devil, have made it impossible for any man, in so great a variety of matter, not to be deceived. No man

pretends to it but the pope; and no man is more deceived than he is in that very particular.

FROM hence proceeds a danger which is consequent hereunto; for if we, who are so apt to be deceived, and so insecure in our resolution of questions disputable, should persecute one disagreeing from us, we are not sure that we do not *fight against God*. For if his proposition be true, and persecuted; then, because all truth is derived from God, this proceeding is against God, and therefore (upon Gamaliel's ground) this is not to be done, lest peradventure we be found to fight against God: Of which because we can have no security in this case, we have all the guilt of a doubtful or an uncertain conscience. For if there be no security in the thing, the conscience in such cases is as uncertain as the question is. And if the conscience be not doubtful, where it is uncertain; it is because the man is not wise, but as confident as ignorant, the first without reason, and the second without excuse.

And it is very disproportionable, for a
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man to persecute another certainly, for a proposition, that if he were wise, he would know is not certain; at least, the other person may innocently be uncertain of it. If he be killed, he is certainly killed; but if he be called heretick, it is not so certain that he is an heretick. It would be good therefore, that proceedings were according to evidence, and the rivers not swell over the banks, nor a certain definitive sentence of death passed upon such persuasions as cannot certainly be defined.

And this argument is of so much the more force, because we see, that the greatest persecutions that ever have been, were against truth, even against christianity it self. And it was a prediction of our blessed Saviour, that persecution should be the lot of true believers. And if we compute the experience of what christians have suffered, and the prediction that truth should suffer, with those few instances of hereticks that have suffered; it is odds, but that persecution is on the wrong side; and that it is error and heresy that are cruel and tyrannical; especially since the truth of Jesus Christ, and of his religion, is so meek, so charitable,

charitable, and so merciful: And we may, in this case, exactly use the words of St. Paul, *But as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now*; and so it ever will be till Christ's second coming.

FURTHER: Whoever persecutes those that differ from him, *arms all the world against himself*, when the scale of authority returns to the other side; and then, what can he urge for mercy to himself, that shewed none to others? If he says, that he is to be spared because he believes true, but the other was justly persecuted because he was in error, this is ridiculous. For his adversary as constantly believes him to be an heretic, as he believes his adversary to be such; and whether he be or no, being the thing in question, of this he is not to be his own judge, but he that hath authority on his side will be sure to judge against him. So that what either side may indifferently make use of, it is good that neither of them would do so; because neither side can with reason sufficient do it, in prejudice of the other.

If a man will say, that every man must
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take his adventure, and if it happens for authority to be with him, he will persecute his adversaries; and if it turns against him, he will bear it as well as he can, and hope for a reward of martyrdom and innocent suffering: Besides that this is so equal to be said of all sides; and besides that this is a way to make an eternal disunion of hearts and charities, and that it will make Christendom nothing but a slaughter house, and a perpetual butchery; and as fast as mens wits grow wanton, or confident, or proud, or abused, so often there will be new executions and massacres;—besides all this, it is most unreasonable and unjust; as being contrary to those laws of justice and charity whereby we are bound, with greater zeal to spare and preserve an innocent person, than to condemn a guilty one; and there is less malice and iniquity in sparing the guilty, than in condemning the good. Because it is in the power of men, to remit a guilty person to the divine judicature, and (for divers causes) not to use severity; but in no case is it lawful, neither hath God at all given to man a power, to condemn such persons, as cannot be proved other than
pious.

pious and innocent. And therefore it is better, if it should so happen, that we should spare the innocent person, and one that is actually deceived, than that upon the turn of the wheel, the true believers should be destroyed.

AND this very reason, he that had authority sufficient, and absolute, to make laws, was pleased to urge as a reasonable inducement, for the establishing of that law which he made for the indemnity of erring persons. It was in the parable of the *tares*, mingled with the good seed in the lord's field. The good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one: Upon this comes the precept, *Gather not the tares by themselves, but let them both grow together till the harvest*, that is, till the day of judgment.

MOREOVER: To persecute him who differs from us, is extremely *imprudent*; and that, whether he be in error, or he be a true believer. If he be a true believer, then it is a clear case, that we do open violence to God, and his servants, and his truth. If he

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he be in error, what greater folly and stupidity can there be, than to give to error the glory of *martyrdom*, and the advantages which are accidentally consequent to a persecution? For as it was true of the martyrs of old, that the increase of their trouble was the increase of their confidence, and the establishment of their persuasions; so it is in all *false* opinions: For that an opinion is true or false, is foreign or accidental to the consequences and advantages it gets by being afflicted. And there is a popular pity, that follows all persons in misery; and that compassion breeds likeness of affections; and that very often produceth likeness of persuasion; and so much the rather, because there arises a jealousy and pregnant suspicion, that they who persecute an opinion are destitute of sufficient arguments to confute it, and that the hangman is the best disputant.

For if those arguments which they have for their own doctrine were a sufficient ground of confidence and persuasion, men would be more willing to use those means, which are better compliances with human understanding, which do more naturally satisfy

satisfy it, which are more humane and christian, than that way, which satisfies none, which destroys many, which provokes more, and which makes all men jealous.

To which we may add, that those who die for their opinion, leave in all men great arguments of the heartiness of their belief, of the confidence of their persuasion, of the piety and innocency of their persons, of the purity of their intention and simplicity of purposes; that they are persons totally disinterested, and separate from design.

For no interest can be so great, as to be put in balance against a man's life and his soul. And he does very imprudently serve his ends, who seeingly and foreknowingly loseth his life in the prosecution of them. It is just as if a man should offer to die for another, upon condition he might receive a sum of money when he had done his work. It is certainly an argument of a great love, and a great confidence, and a great sincerity, and a great hope, when a man lays down his life in attestation of a proposition. *Greater love than this hath no man, than to lay down his life* (saith our Saviour). And altho' laying of a *wager* is
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an argument of confidence more than truth, yet laying *such* a wager, staking of a man's soul, and pawning his life, gives an hearty testimony that the person is honest, resigned, charitable, and noble. And it may be questioned, whether truth can do a person or a cause more advantages, than these can do to an error. And therefore, besides the impiety, there is great imprudence, in canonizing an heretick, and consecrating an error, by such means; which were better preserved as encouragements of truth, and comforts to real and true martyrs.

To all which we may add, that to persecute those that differ from us in opinion, is also *unnatural*, and *unreasonable*. Unnatural; for the understanding being a thing wholly spiritual, cannot be restrained, and therefore neither can it be punished by corporal afflictions. And since all punishments, in a prudent government, are inflicted upon the offender, either for cure or prevention; and since no punishment of the body can cure a disease in the soul; it is disproportionable in nature, and in all civil govern-

government, to punish where the punishment can do no good. It may be an act of tyranny, but never of justice. For an opinion is never the more true or false for being persecuted. Some men have believed it the more, as being provoked into a confidence, and vexed into a resolution; but the thing it self is not the truer. And tho' the executioner may confute a man by an argument not to be gainsaid, yet he cannot convince his understanding; for such premises can infer no conclusion, but that of a man's life. And a wolf may as well give laws to the understanding, as he whose dictates are only propounded in violence, and written in blood. And a dog is as capable of a law as a man, if there be no choice in his obedience, and no reason to direct his choice.—And as it is unnatural, so it is *unreasonable*, that one man should force another to be of his opinion, because he is backed with power; as if he that can kill a man cannot but be infallible: And if he be not, why should he do violence to that man's conscience, only because he can do violence to his person?

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IN short: Force in matters of opinion *can do no good*, but is very apt to *do hurt*. For no man can change his opinion when he will; or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false, only because it is discountenanced. If a man could change his opinion when he has a mind, he might cure many inconveniencies of his life: All his fears and his sorrows would soon disband, if he would but alter his opinion, whereby he is persuaded, that such an accident that afflicts him is an evil, and such an object formidable. Let him but believe himself impregnable, or that he receives a benefit when he is plundered, disgraced, imprisoned, condemned, and afflicted; neither his sleeps need to be disturbed, nor his quietness discomposed. But if a man cannot change his opinion when he pleases; nor even doth so, heartily or resolutely, but when he cannot do otherwise; then, to use force, may make him an hypocrite, but never to be a right believer.

FINALLY: It is one of the glories of the *christian religion*, that it was so pious,

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excellent, miraculous, and persuasive; that it came in upon its own piety and wisdom, with no other force but a torrent of arguments and demonstrations of the spirit; like a mighty rushing wind, to beat down all strong holds, and every high thought and imagination; but towards the persons of men, it was always full of meekness and charity, compliance and toleration, condescension and bearing with one another, *restoring persons overtaken with an error, in the spirit of meekness, considering lest we also be tempted.*

And it would be a mighty disparagement to so glorious an institution, that in its principle it should be merciful and humane, and in the promotion and propagation of it so inhuman. And it would be improbable and unreasonable, that violence should be used in the persuasion of one proposition, and yet in the persuasion of the whole religion nothing like it. To do so, may serve the end of a temporal prince, but never promote the honour of Christ's kingdom, the sense and spirit whereof is described in those excellent words of St. Paul
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(with which I shall conclude): *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

S E R M O N XXV.

Sincerity ineffectual without a good
Life.

[From CLAGETT's Third Volume.]

PHIL. I. 10.

*That ye may approve things that are excellent,
that ye may be SINCERE, and without
offence till the day of Christ.*

NO man that considers what he says, pretends to the comforts of religion, but upon the supposition of his own *sincerity*. We are ashamed, upon other terms, to expect the pardon of our sins, the favour of God, and everlasting life. And indeed, one main and necessary ground of every good man's confidence towards God, is the conscience of his sincerity. So that a great stress is laid upon this attainment, and in truth not without reason. But therefore it must needs be of dangerous consequence, to
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be mistaken in the judgment we make of our selves, in reference to this quality; and it is therefore equally dangerous, to be mistaken in the judgment we make concerning the thing it self.

Every body knows wherein sincerity *towards one another* consisteth, that is, in performing promises, in dealing ingenuously, and in intending and doing that kindness to our neighbour, which we have made him to expect from us. We understand these parts of sincerity, because we expect them from others. Our interest, in this case, happens to secure us from mistake.—But *that* sincerity is of a much larger extent, upon which a good man builds his *hope in God*, and his comfort at the hour of death. It is what comprehends all other duty to God, and man, and our selves. It is that whereby his whole conversation is governed. It is what our Saviour, in the parable of the sower, calls the *honest and good heart*. It is purity of intention, love of the truth, and impartiality in obedience. It is a far more excellent quality, than *they* represent it, who support their confidence of their own good state, by a persuasion, that God

will accept of their sincerity, while the ways in which they are engaged, would give them little cause of comfort, if they were thoroughly examined and understood,

To avoid such dangerous mistakes, we must in the first place beware of trusting to imperfect accounts of sincerity; for instance, such as this,—*that a man be the same in reality, that he is in appearance.* For tho' this is necessary to the character of a sincere man, yet it is by no means sufficient. If this were enough, then every shameless libertine, every bold malefactor, in not dissembling his vices to the world, were equally honest with professors of the truth, and sufferers for righteousness sake. Something else must be added to this rule, to make it a test of an honest man, that is, he must pretend to piety and virtue; and if he answers that pretence, by inward temper of mind, and practice in life, then he hath true sincerity.

Neither is it sufficient for this purpose, —*to be true to the persuasion we are of*, not omitting what in duty we believe our selves bound to do, nor doing what we believe our selves bound to forbear. Now this is also
judged

judged absolutely necessary to the nature of sincerity, that tho' the persuasion be erroneous, a man is bound to follow it. And it is a vain thing to go about to prove, that a man ought not to follow the dictates of his conscience, that he may without sin act contrary to his own judgment of what he ought to do or avoid. And the reason is plain; because no body can do this, but he is presently conscious to himself of evil doing: And I think he has a very hard task, who undertakes to shew, that a man may be honest in that very thing, wherein he knows himself to be a knave.

So that this is unavoidably necessary to sincerity, namely, to govern the practice by conscience, or by persuasion, concerning good and evil. But then this is not enough. For if it were, he that should act the greatest villanies, under a persuasion that they were deeds worthy of praise, would be as honest a man, as if his conscience had led him to no actions, but what were truly virtuous and good.—But this is a conclusion that is not to be endured. It is easy to discern, how pernicious and insufferable the consequences of it would be; and it will

not be hard to shew, that it is in it self false ; and therefore, that to this character of a sincere man, that he follows his conscience or judgment in his practice, we must add something else to make it compleat, and that is, that his judgment be *rightly informed* what he is to do and what he is to avoid in obedience to God's will, and that he *believes* all that truth which is necessary to such obedience.

And this is that which I shall endeavour to make out,—that sincerity doth not only exclude gross hypocrisy, and that dishonesty of which a man cannot but be conscious to himself ; but that it implies moreover, the doing of that which God requires in all our ways, and by consequence the *knowledge of that duty* which God hath shewn to us, and the *belief of that truth* which he hath made known, to bring us to repentance, and thereby to salvation.

These are points necessary to be cleared ; because most men do not desire they should prove true. We would be so easy, when we think of God and another world, that we love not to take pains enough to be safe. But he only that is upon safe grounds, has
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reason to be satisfied in himself. And therefore let me put you in mind, what those grounds are in the case before us, which is of no less concern than our everlasting salvation.

First of all then; Whatever else is implied in sincerity, it undoubtedly includes *the keeping of God's commandments.* We trust, that God will accept the sincere doing of his will; but then we must be sure that it *be done*, and not trust in vain words, as if sincerity would serve us instead of well doing.

If we understand what we say, we can mean nothing less by sincerity towards God, than a religious sense of God's authority, and of his infinite perfections; and to make this the end and reason of our actions, that we please him in all our ways. So that it signifies, a pious disposition of mind, which leads us to all obedience, and which indeed makes our service fit to be regarded.

And therefore it is a foolish thing, to make the pretence of that, an excuse for many and great faults; which, in the truth and reality thereof, is the undoubted cause of committing the fewest. It stands not
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with common sense to imagine, that instead of recommending our obedience, it should recommend our sin, to the acceptance of God. We may as well thank a man for his good meaning, in a thing wherein he hath dealt very treacherously.

If it were allowable thus, for our own ease, to divide a sincere mind from a good life; *he* certainly would need a great deal of sincerity, whose conscience is loaded with the repetition of most grievous sins: and yet, if we will not talk absurdly, he hath very little of it, if any at all.

It is true indeed, that a sincere man may fall into heinous transgression; but then, so far as the temptation hath made him an evil doer, so far it hath corrupted his sincerity; and he hath no way to return into the grace of God, but by repentance, and reformation.

The Scripture describes the uprightness of *Job*, by his fearing God, and *eschewing evil*.—Thus *St. Paul's* rejoicing was grounded upon this, that he had his conversation in the world *in simplicity and godly sincerity*.—And this very place, where he prays that the *Philippians* might be *sincere*, he farther
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explains himself by adding, *and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God.*

The truth is, he that presumes upon his sincerity, but considers not how he has lived, begins at the wrong end. For there is no place for that question, whether we be sincere or not, till we are first conscious of well doing. When we have eschewed evil, and done the thing that is good; then, and not till then, it is reasonable to inquire, whether we have in thus doing been influenced by pious and virtuous intentions, or whether we have spoiled all by directing our good deeds to corrupt ends. And tho' we should not be unwilling to admit this in the general; yet it is impossible we should deny it, when we come to particulars. For instance, we are to give alms; not for this end, to be seen of men; but in obedience to God, in charity to the poor, and in belief of God's rewards: But surely he is in no condition to make this question, Whether he gives to be seen of men, who gives no alms at all.

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The greatest difficulty is, to convince men, that a sincere and honest mind doth necessarily suppose, the *understanding of that duty* which God requires, and the *belief of that truth* which he hath revealed, to bring us to repentance and obedience. For it may be said perhaps, that tho' it be in a man's power, to conform his practice to his judgment; yet his belief is not in his own power. If things appear to him otherwise than they are, how can he help that? If he be mistaken, he is rather to be pitied than condemned; it seems to be his unhappiness, but not his fault.

Now indeed, this may be reasonably said in several cases, where the mistake lies in things of lesser moment, and where it doth not lead to any evil practice: And I do not say, that sincerity supposes a man to be free from all error in questions of religion; for then no man could be honest, unless he were infallible. But then, there are some things, in which it is not consistent with the honesty of a christian, or of a man, to be deceived; namely, where the truth is plain by natural reason, or by particular revelation, and where the error is gross, and
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of dangerous consequence; if the truth be propounded with due evidence, and if there be sufficient means to discover the error.

There are many points, in which it is evident that an honest man cannot be mistaken; and they are such as these: That all men are bound to rules of common justice: That children should honour their parents; and the like. Let us now suppose, that a man believes some doctrine repugnant to these, and all other rules of morality: For instance, that there is no other rule of right, but power; and that a man may lawfully do any thing that he has force enough to justify; and that, in pursuance of this persuasion, he should oppress his neighbours that are weaker than himself, and seize upon all that he could safely lay his hands on, without respect to right or wrong, properly so called; I believe none of us would count him an honest man, tho' he acts according to principles which he heartily believes, but rather the farther from being honest, for being corrupted to so great a degree, as to have lost the sense of good and evil. Experience, as well as Scripture, shews, that men may have a reprobate sense,

and a seared conscience; that their very mind and conscience may be defiled; that they may do things, which the common sense of mankind proclaims to be unjust and wicked; while, if we believe what they say of themselves, their own hearts reproach them not: These are not only wicked, but desperately wicked men; *if the light that is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness?* In all things of this nature, it is evident, that without faith and knowledge the heart cannot be good.

Besides, we are to consider, that all men who have natural capacity, and means of understanding God's will, are *obliged* to know it; and therefore sincerity cannot consist with unbelief and ignorance thereof, because it cannot stand with persisting in the neglect of plain duty. God revealed his will to mankind, by the light of nature, and by the promulgation of the Gospel, on purpose that it might be known; and all this would have been to no purpose, if ignorance might be pleaded in excuse, when the law is sufficiently made plain, in all matters necessary to be known, that is, in all things necessary to salvation.

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In truth, the real causes of unbelief and errors in matters of faith, are not because the means of right knowledge are wanting; but they are such as these,—covetousness, ambition, strife, and anger, the affectation of vain glory, the love of ease, and pleasure, partiality, and the serving of a by-cause; and, in short, any inordinate affection whatsoever. For where such dispositions as these reign, they corrupt the mind with secret dislikes of the truth, and extinguish the very desire of knowing it, and there can be no sincerity there.

And this must needs be a fatal cause of unbelief and delusion, in matters of religion; because the evidence of divine truth, tho' it is abundantly sufficient for the conviction of ingenuous and honest minds, yet is not fitted to overcome the perverseness of the prejudiced and dishonest, that have an interest against it. Great is the evidence of religious truth; but yet that evidence is such, as may be resisted by the cavils and obstinacy of sincere men. For, all the while, it is possible to find out pretences for unbelief and error, where the doctrine of religion is shown by never so clear a light,

light, whilst that light is no more than a rational, but not an irresistible evidence. And then, vicious men will strain hard for such pretences; because religion is also a doctrine that requires a strict holy life. It pinches the covetous man from unjust gains. It forbids the voluptuous man his pleasures. It restrains the injured party from revenge. It meets every man in his sin; and checks him in his ill way; and will have him live by rules, under the severest penalties.

And this is the true reason, why some try to ease themselves by unbelief; and others, by a false way of religion of their own contriving, that unties the cord, and gives some relaxation from the strictness of the true religion.

So that, an *honest mind* is requisite to the understanding and believing of the things of God; and unbelief and error cannot consist with sincerity, where insincerity is the cause of it.

WHEREFORE, by way of application of this discourse, let us be exhorted to get that *honest and good heart*, which is the great preparation for a firm *faith*, and true *know-*
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ledge in the things of God. And the first step towards this is, to put in practice our knowledge of the plainest things of all in piety and virtue. Let us set the fear of God before our eyes, and the great concern of a judgment to come; and learn to prefer our salvation hereafter, before the riches, the pleasures, and the honours of this world, before the praise of men, or even all the advantages of this life. Then shall we be prepared, by a full purpose of mind, to do whatsoever shall appear to be God's will, and to receive whatsoever shall appear to be God's truth.

And when we have endeavoured to know that doctrine, which is to lead us into the performance of our duty, because we would do it; and have considered our proper prejudices, to remove them, and to set our selves in a better light to discern between truth and error; and have added our earnest prayers to God, that he would keep us from being led into any dangerous mistake;—then we may be confident, that no vicious affection hath polluted the purity of our intention to know and do our master's will; and then may we wash our hands in inno-

cency, not arrogantly boasting thereof, but with humility and thankfulness, acknowledging the gift and grace of God, in giving us the hope of eternal life, in purifying us by that hope, in the illuminating our understandings, and guiding of our wills by his good spirit, till he makes us meet for himself.

To conclude the whole: They are blessed that by this way arrive to sound knowledge, namely, by the cleansing of their actions, and the purifying of their intentions, a way that will lead them not only to knowledge, but to salvation. Whereas if we depart from God, by an impure mind, and a wicked life; we are in a certain way of damnation, tho' the truth of every question in religion were revealed to us by an angel, or by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

But blessed are the righteous in that integrity of theirs, and in that good conscience of their own sincerity, which, like light, sheweth *it self*, as well as *other things*. It gives them that ease and peace, and those pure delights, which the world cannot take away. It makes their poverty, and their
4 sickness

sickness, better than the health and prosperity of other men; yea, even their death more desirable, than the pleasures of life.

When flatterers forsake us, nay, and when our true friends cannot profit us; our honesty and sincerity will be a true friend indeed, and stick by us to the last, and it makes God to be our friend for ever. For they are blessed, that are sincere; because such are qualified for the happiness and everlasting reward of the future life, and to appear before the great all-seeing God, who searches the heart, and trieth the reins, and to whom nothing will serve to recommend us without real integrity: For, as our Saviour tells us, the *pure in heart* are the *blessed that shall see God*: That shall be our immense reward, if we be sincere and without offence before him, and our hearts be right in his sight.



